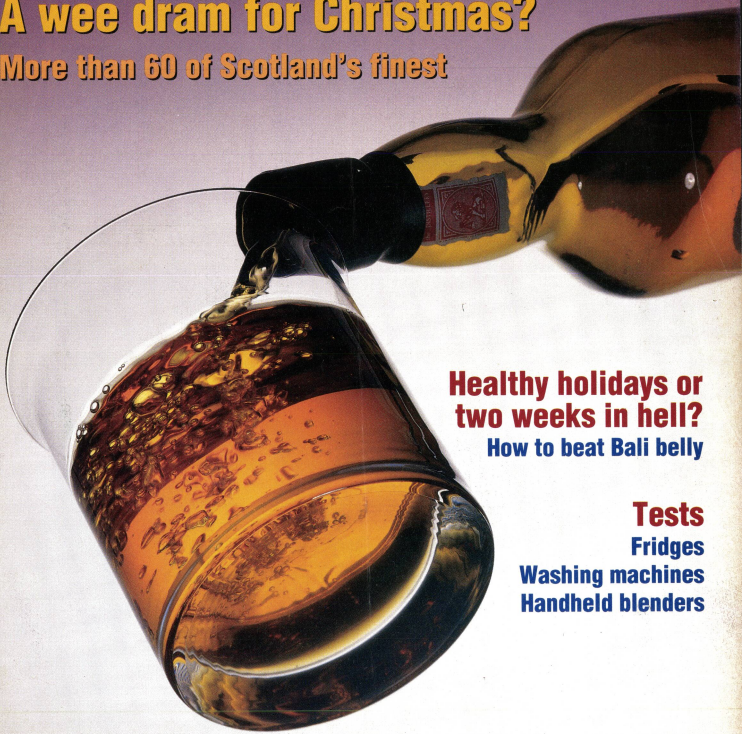
Australian Consumers' Association December 1995

CHOICE

A wee dram for Christmas?

More than 60 of Scotland's finest

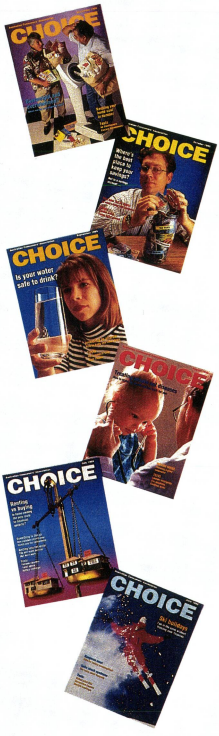


Healthy holidays or two weeks in hell?

How to beat Bali belly

Tests

Fridges
Washing machines
Handheld blenders



About the Consumers' Association

The Australian Consumers' Association is a non-profit, non-party-political organisation established in 1959 to provide consumers with information and advice on goods, services, health and personal finances, and to help maintain and enhance the quality of life for consumers.

We are completely independent. We buy all the products we test on the open market. We are not beholden to any commercial, government or union interests, and we don't accept advertising, paid or unpaid. Our income is derived from the sale of CHOICE and our other publications and products.

We test and rate products and services. Our CHOICE ratings are usually based on quality without regard to price, and are derived from lab tests, expert judgments and reader surveys. If a product is high in quality and relatively low in price, we deem it a Best Buy. A rating applies only to the brand and model tested, not to other models sold under the same brand name, unless so noted. We can't conduct special tests or provide information about tested products beyond what appears in CHOICE.

No commercial use policy. Our ratings and reports may not be used in advertising or for any other commercial purpose. The Consumers' Association will take all steps open to it to prevent commercial use of its materials, its name, and the name of CHOICE or our other publications. Please report any apparent violation to the Consumers' Association, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204; fax (02) 558 9341.

We represent and act in consumers' interests. We lobby and campaign on behalf of consumers to promote consumers' rights, to influence government policy, and to ensure consumer issues have a high profile in the public arena.

Membership. Subscribers can become voting members of the Consumers' Association on application. Membership costs $75 per year, which covers your subscription to CHOICE plus a further subscription to our policy magazine, *Consuming Interest*.

About CHOICE

CHOICE is published monthly by the Australian Consumers' Association.

Subscription rates. $48 for one year, $89 for two years; institutions $66 per year.

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Back issues. Subscribers can buy back issues at the following rates: $6 for one copy, $10 for two, $13 for three, and $4 each after that. Non-subscribers can purchase back issues that are less than 12 months old for $16 per copy; more than 12 months old, $10. Write to Consumer Information Service, CHOICE, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, or phone (02) 559 9855.

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Other Consumers' Association products

CHOICE Books publishes non-fiction titles on a wide range of topics, with a consumer perspective.

Consumer Bookshelf offers both CHOICE Books and material from other publishers for sale by mail order.

CHOICEFax supplies faxed copies of many CHOICE articles for $6 per article to subscribers, $16 to non-subscribers. Call 558 8088 to order an article, using your credit card details.

Test Research provides fee-for-service testing of consumer products for other consumer organisations, government and industry. Contact Jeanette Dwyer on (02) 559 9801.

Consuming Interest, our quarterly campaigning magazine, is published in February, May, August and November. It provides straight facts, probing analysis, in-depth reporting, informed opinion and stimulating debates. It also gives updates on the lobbying and campaign projects of the Consumers' Association.

CHOICE Travel. This magazine is produced by the UK Consumers' Association and reprinted by CHOICE four times a year. Its reports are independent in the same style as CHOICE and, while they're written from the perspective of a European base, most of the information in them is just as useful to travelling Australians.

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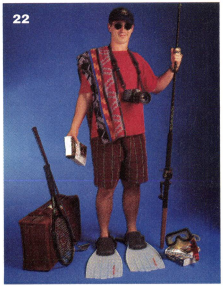

Coming in the next three issues

Tests: Digital mobile phones, Windows 95, termite inspections, ice cream, cassette decks, microwave ovens, electric wall ovens, multi-disc CD players, answering machines, window locks.

Reports: Using the hospital system, buying a mobile phone, smart cards, making a will, new surgical techniques, pay TV vs free-to-air, house and contents insurance, bottled water, choosing a lawyer, home security, genetic engineering in food, car reliability survey results, buying a new bathroom.

We try to bring you tests and reports in the planned month, but sometimes have to move an article because of problems that occur during testing and research, or for lack of space in a particular issue. We apologise if this causes any inconvenience.

Choice Regulars

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High chair hassles; allergies to cosmetics; new gas laws; babies' tooth decay; update on air conditioning.

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Our regular consumer quiz.

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Choice Reports

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You're counting the days till your long-awaited holiday, but what do you need to do to make sure illness doesn't lay you low?

32 Airline overbooking

It's 10 o'clock at night in a strange country, you've got a connecting flight to catch in Singapore and you're laden down with luggage — what can you do when the airline says your flight is full?

Choice Tests

6 CHOICE's Annual Buying Guide

The products that came out best in our tests for the past year, to help you with Christmas gifts and the January sales.

13 Scotch whisky

A Christmas dram can set you back as little as $17 or over $60. Our lucky tasters worked their way through more than 60 scotches to bring you the 10 best drops for celebrating.

27 Fridges

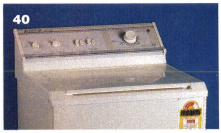
Large, 500 L family-size fridges offer versatile storage space, and we found one frost-free model that was as cheap as some fridges you have to defrost.

35 Handheld blenders

Whip up a milkshake, blend soup in the pot, get the lumps out of gravy — and you don't have to spend more than $30 to do it!

40 Washing machines

Which machines wash the cleanest, without destroying the planet or your finances? We put 70 front- and top-loading machines to the test, to bring you the answers.



Child safety

CAM RITMO CURED

UNFORTUNATELY IT SOMETIMES happens: we recommend a product, then the manufacturer changes it and the new version turns out to be faulty — much to the annoyance of consumers.

The Cam Ritmo high chair: knuckling under no more.

In July 1993 we published a test report about high chairs, and Babyco's **CAM Ritmo** was highly recommended.

Soon after the report was printed, Babyco changed the high chair's design, resulting in a number of the chairs being sold with faulty 'knuckles' (the plastic joint that holds the chair's legs together).

As a result, we received many calls from upset purchasers who had bought the chair on our recommendation, only to have the knuckles break after several months' use. They also complained about being given the runaround by Babyco's customer service people.

Babyco tells us it has now fixed the problem, and all faulty **CAM Ritmo** chairs brought to their attention have been checked and the faulty knuckles replaced. The company believes the problem has been eliminated, but if you have a **CAM Ritmo** with faulty knuckles, contact Babyco on (03) 9764 3333 for repair and replacement of the faulty parts.

National legislation

UNIFORM GAS LAWS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE gas industry, which has achieved the virtually impossible — it convinced federal and state governments to agree to uniform legislation for approval of gas appliances (for example, gas heaters, cooktops and ovens).

The decision was made at a recent meeting of ministers from the Australian and New Zealand Minerals and Energy Council. While it will take some months for the legislation to become official, the wheels have been set in motion.

For years now each state has had its own approval scheme for gas appliances, which meant unapproved appliances occasionally managed to slip onto the market.

The Australian Gas Association, which approves gas appliances in conjunction with the Australian Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association and state government-appointed regulators, says uniform legislation will prevent manufacturers or importers supplying unapproved appliances to shops.

We can only hope government ministers continue with this approach from now on and encourage national legislation in other areas such as education, transport, and the building and construction industry.

Cosmetics

FACING UP TO COSMETIC ALLERGIES

SINCE OCTOBER 1993 — following years of lobbying by the Consumers' Association — it's been mandatory for all cosmetic products to be labelled with their ingredients listed clearly and legibly in English.

Ingredients making up 1% or more of the final product must be listed in descending order — so you know it contains more of whatever is near the top of the list.

If you have an allergy problem, however, it can be difficult to spot ingredients you might react to, as more than one name can be used for each. It would be much easier if manufacturers agreed to use only one standard name.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If your skin breaks out or becomes red and itchy after using a particular cosmetic, Dr Susanne Freeman — a leading contact dermatitis specialist with Sydney's Skin and Cancer Foundation — says it's best to rest your skin from cosmetics for a while rather than immediately buy a different product in the hope that it won't also cause problems.

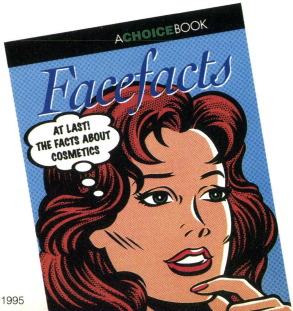
Many cosmetics are now being marketed as hypo-allergenic. That doesn't mean they're allergy-free, but they're less likely to cause allergy than other cosmetic lines. They're generally fragrance-free, as perfumes cause most cosmetic allergies. They may also be free of certain preservatives known to often trigger allergic reactions.

It's more common to have irritated skin than an allergy to cosmetic ingredients. The culprit may not be the new product you're trying at all. You may simply need to reduce the number of cosmetics you use. Or you could try not using soap — some women find it too drying and irritating for their skin.

If you continue to have skin trouble after using a cosmetic item, you may want to see your GP for a referral to a dermatologist so you can have a skin patch test to see what, if anything, you're allergic or sensitive to. That's preferable to wasting money trying numerous cosmetic brands, as you may be sensitive to one common ingredient.

If your patch test is positive, ask your dermatologist to write down the name — or various different names — of the ingredient you should avoid, so you can check the label for it before you buy a new product.

If you want to know more about what we put on our faces and hair, the CHOICE book *Facefacts: a guide to cosmetics, skin and hair care* is a good place to start — see *Consumer Bookshelf* on page 19.



Baby health

COMFORTING BOTTLE CAUSES CARIES

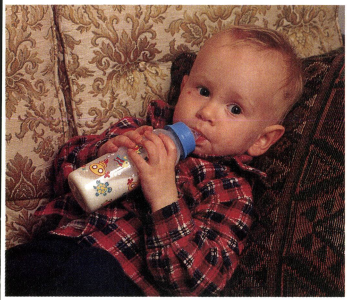
THE AUSTRALIAN DENTAL Association warns that you shouldn't let your child sleep for prolonged periods while bottle or breastfeeding, as it can cause severe decay of their front teeth.

According to the Association, nursing bottle caries is a growing problem. When babies are allowed to take a bottle to bed and suck on it slowly as a comforter, the liquid pools around the teeth. In the mouth, sugars in the drink are converted into acids, which then attack tooth enamel.

Even milk (which contains lactose — milk sugar) can cause decay if it stays in the mouth for several hours. So leaving a sleeping baby on the breast is also a dental hazard once they have teeth.

Although baby teeth will fall out eventually anyway, Adelaide orthodontist Helen McLean warns that if baby teeth have to be removed before they're ready to fall out naturally, orthodontic treatment may be needed later on because there is insufficient space for the permanent teeth to develop normally.

The Dental Association also advises babies' teeth be cleaned regularly as soon as they appear. When children are very young, simply wipe their teeth with a cloth and possibly a smear of children's (low-fluoride) toothpaste. As more teeth emerge, start using a small, soft toothbrush instead of a cloth. And take children for their first dental check-up once they have their front teeth.



Don't let your baby sleep with a bottle or while breastfeeding — it could lead to tooth decay.

Update

MORE EVIDENCE ON HYDROCARBONS

In *Drivelines* in the October 1995 issue, we said safety concerns about hydrocarbons (HCs) had prompted the US Environmental Protection Agency to prohibit the main hydrocarbon refrigerant, HC-12a, from being used as a replacement refrigerant in car air conditioners.

This was in fact too global a statement. The US EPA currently prohibits the use of HC-12a as a CFC replacement in car air conditioners, but not as a replacement for HFCs (hydrofluorocarbons), which have already replaced CFCs in some cars.

We commented in the article that there have been "very few studies" into the safety of HC refrigerants in car air conditioners. Dr Ian Maclaine-cross of the School of Mechanical Engineering at the University of NSW has since informed us of two more such studies, making a total of five: two from Europe, two from the US and the fifth from his work at the University of NSW.

Dr Maclaine-cross says more than 200,000 cars in the US have air conditioners with HC refrigerants and there have been no accidents related to the flammability of the car air conditioner refrigerant. He estimates over 5000 cars have HC-refrigerant air conditioning in Australia, mostly in Queensland.

A major study by Arthur D Little in the UK for Calor (a manufacturer of hydrocarbons) has just been released, which concluded that the use of Calor's HCs in car air-conditioning systems poses negligible increased risk of accidental fires.

On October 26, Faye Lo Po', NSW Minister for Fair Trading, prohibited the use of hydrocarbons in motor vehicle air-conditioning systems. Media coverage of the ban included spectacular video footage of an exploding car.

Responding to criticism of her action, Faye Lo Po' said she was protecting consumers. "I've erred on the side of caution. The debate can rage on and if it's proved at the end of the day that it is safe, we'll take a different point of view."

We'll keep you informed of developments.

Corrections

PET OWNERSHIP

CHOICE, October 1995

On page 30 we said the Australian Spotted Mist cat breed is "claimed to have no instinct to hunt". This should have read: "The Australian Spotted Mist cat has been bred so that inherent hunting instincts are redirected, and the cat interacts with people instead. These cats prefer the company of humans to hunting."

HELD TO ACCOUNT

CHOICE, October 1995

On page 12 we listed the St George Bank Freedom Select Deluxe account as having no charge for being accidentally overdrawn, which was correct according to our information source. However, the bank does in fact sometimes charge for this.

Can you help?

SAFETY SWITCHES

Do you have a so-called 'safety switch' fitted in your fuse box to protect all the electrical circuits in your home? Most new houses and major renovations in recent years should have one, or you might have decided to install one to protect yourself and your home.

If you have a safety switch on your main fuse box, has it 'tripped' (cut out) without good reason? (We're interested in 'no' as well as 'yes'.)

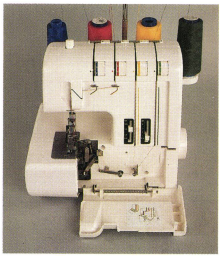
Please write to **Safety switches**, 57 Carrington Road, Marrickville 2204, including the following information:

- Your name.
- Your address and phone number.
- How long you've had a mains safety switch.
- Whether you have a separate fridge/freezer circuit to prevent your food from spoiling if the main safety switch cuts out.
- Whether your safety switch has cut out inappropriately; if so, how many times, and do you know why it happened?
- Whether you lost any food or your fridge or freezer was damaged because of a cut-out.

The choicest gifts

At Christmas you often need new household appliances or ideas for presents. To help, we've reviewed the top performers and Best Buys of the products we've tested over the past year and summarised here those that are still on the market. If you need more information or want to check for special features, look at the original reports in previous issues.

There are several tests in this issue that might be helpful too — scotch on page 13, fridges on page 27, blenders on page 35, and washing machines on page 40.



Prices given are generally based on nationwide checks carried out in September this year. Products are listed in rank order.

HOUSEHOLD

OVERLOCKERS
(May 1995)

Using a home overlocker is no guarantee you'll produce clothes worthy of the catwalk, but it should help give your sewing a neat, professional look. We tested nine of the cheapest four-thread machines with differential feed and evaluated them for stitch quality and ease of use. ('Differential feed' helps eliminate wavy seams and puckering, particularly on fine or stretchy fabrics.)

The ELNA was the best overall performer, and the quietest machine tested. All but one of the other models were OK, with the JANOME being the best budget buy, although it vibrated a lot.

BEST PERFORMER

ELNA 614DE $700

GOOD BUDGET BUY

JANOME My Lock 134D $500

ELECTRIC CONVECTION HEATERS
(June 1995)

We set out to see how good electric convection heaters were at heating a family-sized room. We looked at their features and ease of use and rated them on how effectively and evenly they heated.

Of the recommended heaters, the **VULCAN Quasar Manual** is a good basic heater. The two **VULCAN Quasar Electronics** (the **Deluxe** and the **Premier**) have the most features, but are also the most expensive. The two **GOLDAIRs** are much cheaper and smaller than the others, and might be preferable if you only want to heat a small room.

WHAT TO BUY

	VULCAN Quasar Elite Deluxe Manual 82E	$364
equal	**VULCAN** Quasar Elite Deluxe Electronic 82F	$435
	VULCAN Quasar Elite Premier Electronic 82F	$453
equal	**GOLDAIR** Turbo-Convector 8050	$129
	GOLDAIR Turbo-Convector 8100	$169

DOOR LOCKS
(December 1994)

Many burglaries of Australian homes involve forcing a door or a window. Although a good lock won't be much use if the door and jamb aren't up to scratch, having an effective door lock will at least deter prospective ransackers, and the best locks should stop them in their tracks.

Our testers systematically attacked all widely available double-cylinder deadlocks (which included deadbolts and deadlatches), using a jemmy and a test rig to administer simulated kicks. The results were very clear — three of the **LOCKWOODs** in the test outperformed all the other locks.

WHAT TO BUY

	LOCKWOOD 355SCA0 Deadlock	$90
equal	**LOCKWOOD** 007 Deadbolt	$110
	LOCKWOOD 001CPA0 Automatic Deadlatch	$65

VACUUM CLEANERS
(July 1995)

How do you get value from your vac? If your priority in choosing a vacuum cleaner is picking up dirt, go for an upright — they're always about twice as good at removing dirt from carpet as any of the barrel or canister cleaners we test. On the other hand, barrel or canister cleaners are generally easier to store, to use on stairs and under furniture, and to get into tight places.

The two **HOOVERs** at the top of our *What to Buy* list scored only slightly better than the two **EUREKA** uprights, but the **EUREKA Bravo the Boss** is very noisy — our tester wore earmuffs to withstand the harsh noise it generated!

WHAT TO BUY

■ Best uprights

equal	**HOOVER** Breeze U1432	$250
	HOOVER Duet U2740	$320
	EUREKA Bravo the Boss AU9334	$200
	EUREKA Bravo AU9002	$160

■ Best of the rest

MIELE S247i	$330
PHILIPS TC 533	$300 *(A)*
PANASONIC MC-E852	$260
VAX 1800	$290
HITACHI CV-99	$200

(A) The manufacturer says it's no longer available, but we found stock in shops in September.

CLOTHES DRYERS
(October 1995)

Clothes dryers are greedy consumers of electricity, so look for as many stars as possible on the energy label when you're shopping around — most can't manage more than three (out of a potential six). Another factor to keep in mind is that not all models give you the option of ducting the outflowing hot, moist air outside — in which case you need a well-ventilated laundry.

All the dryers we tested can be hung upside down if you want the control panel to be lower — for example, if the dryer's mounted above a washing machine. Although our top performers weren't the easiest to use and don't have their filter in the door (which is easier to get at for cleaning), they used less energy and had faster drying times than the rest. The best general performer was the **SIMPSON Maxidry 452/456/457**, closely followed by the **WESTINGHOUSE**, which was also the cheapest to run.

WHAT TO BUY

	SIMPSON Maxidry 452	$300
equal	**SIMPSON** Maxidry 456	$330
	SIMPSON Maxidry 457	$325
	WESTINGHOUSE Laundromat 500	$420

REVERSE-CYCLE AIR CONDITIONERS
(November 1995)

You might be considering buying an air conditioner to stay cool this Christmas. Reverse-cycle air conditioners — also known as heat pumps — work by transferring heat from one area to another. They pump heat from inside your house to the outside, keeping it cool in summer, and from the outside into your home to warm it during winter.

We tested 14 air conditioners to find out which ones had the best cooling and heating performance, energy efficiency and ease of use, while still being quiet enough for you to sleep or hold a conversation. We looked at models with a cooling capacity of less than 3 kW, which are suitable for cooling a bedroom or a small lounge room.

WHAT TO BUY

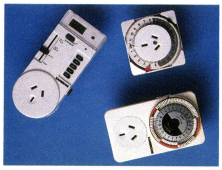
	TOSHIBA RAC-09YH3AX	$950
equal	**CARRIER** 77QRA009	$1075
equal	**HITACHI** RA3107CH	$1000
	SANYO SA-91AH5W	$875

PLUG-IN TIMERS
(February 1995)

Plug-in timers can be used with electrical appliances to turn them on and off. In theory, they sound like a useful and simple technology — not necessarily so in practice. Of the 15 timers tested, we found that with three the front panel could be removed while they were plugged in, exposing live parts; eight used tiny, potentially dangerous pins; and another model had limited usefulness and accuracy. This left only three timers that we could recommend at all.

WHAT TO BUY

KAMBROOK KD84	$29.95
KAMBROOK KD86	$44.95
HPM 819	$32.65



OUTDOORS

CORDLESS DRILLS
(August 1995)

A cordless, battery-powered drill is just the ticket when you're working away from a mains power source. We tested 'middle-of-the-range' models, two from each major brand (where available): a model priced at around $300, and the least expensive model.

We found four especially good performers, with the **METABO Beat 9.6/2 R+L** the best drill overall, though also one of the most expensive. The **BOSCH PBM 9.6VE-2** rated almost as well, and for around half the price it's a clear **Best Buy**. The **RYOBI PWR724R** (costing $159 when we checked for the August article) was only a mid-range performer, but it came in a box with lots of useful accessories — even a torch — and rated highly for ease of use, so it might make a good present.

WHAT TO BUY

	METABO Beat 9.6/2 R+L	$320
	BOSCH PBM 9.6VE-2	$170
equal	**BOSCH** GBM 9.6VES-2	$320
equal	**RYOBI** TFD-220R	$330

CHIPPER/SHREDDERS
(January 1995)

If you're keen on having a composter (see right), you might also want a shredder to feed it or to make wood chippings. We tested electric (rather than petrol) shredders because of their popularity, and put 12 models through their paces to compare performance, ease of use, tendency to clog and safety features. Although they have good safety features, most of these machines do spit back plant debris, so you will need to wear safety goggles and protective gloves.

The top models were clearly both the best performers and the easiest to use. We also found that 'big' isn't necessarily 'better', even in the macho world of shredders — the largest and most expensive shredder scored worst overall!

WHAT TO BUY

AL-KO Dynamic H2200S	$629
ROVER 09664 Maxi Muncher	$649
AL-KO Dynamic H1600S	$529

COMPOST BINS
(December 1994)

There are three main types of composter — aerobic and anaerobic bins, and tumblers — and we tested models of each type. Aerobic bins are designed to improve airflow to the waste matter through ventilation holes in the bin, and are more suited to cooler or humid climates. Anaerobic (which means 'without oxygen') bins involve less maintenance and retain moisture more readily, and are more effective in hot, dry conditions. Tumblers are particularly suitable for big gardens with large amounts of waste. They need to be rotated daily, but should be suitable for most conditions. For any type of bin, though, it's possible to compensate for inappropriate climate conditions by varying the ingredients and the amount of water added.

All the bins produced compost of similarly good quality for the garden — the main differences were consistency, smell, evenness and colour. Aerobic bins and tumblers produced pleasant, earthy-smelling, crumbly compost, while the anaerobic bins' product tended to be wet and slightly smelly.

WHAT WE TESTED

■ Aerobic bins	
AUSSIE ROTTER	$49
RELN	$25
■ Anaerobic bins	
AURORA	$39.95
GEDYE	$72
■ Tumblers	
TUMBLEWEED Mulch Maker	$159

ELECTRIC LAWNMOWERS
(November 1995)

Although there were only six electric lawnmowers on the market at the time we tested — five from the same manufacturer — they varied in performance and suitability for different conditions. There are two types of electric lawnmower — hover and wheeled models. The **FLYMO E400** and **E300** (listed below) are both hover mowers.

The advantages of electric lawnmowers compared to petrol models are that they're generally easier to use (especially hover models, which glide on a cushion of air), vibrate less, and don't require you to mess around with petrol and oil. On the other hand, because they don't cut long grass as well as petrol mowers and have the inconvenience of a power cord, electric lawnmowers are most appropriate for a small yard with few obstacles that is mown regularly.

WHAT TO BUY

■ **For larger lawns and/or longer grass:**
FLYMO E400 ..... $350

■ **For smaller well-kept lawns:**
FLYMO E300 ..... $225

■ **If you prefer a wheeled mower with a catcher:**
FLYMO RE400 ..... $410

LEISURE

CHAMPAGNE AND SPARKLING WINE
(December 1994)

CHOICE assembled a panel of expert tasters to evaluate 57 dry (brut) champagnes and sparkling wines, mostly from France and Australia. The wines were divided into three categories — up to $16, non-vintage wines over $16 and vintage wines over $16. We focused on the cheaper end of the market because when we tested, 65% of the sparkling wines Australians bought cost less than $6.

We combined the top scorers in each category with wines that represent good value to make up the CHOICE mixed dozen.

THE CHOICE MIXED DOZEN

($$ denotes good value.)

■ **Up to $16**

$$ **SEAVIEW** Grande Cuvée $7
TULLOCH Hunter Cuvée Brut 1990 ..... $13
$$ **GREAT WESTERN** Imperial Reserve $5.50
$$ **MATTHEW LANG & CO** Brut Cuvée $5

■ **More than $16 — Non-vintage**

BOLLINGER Special Cuvée Brut $60
CHARLES HEIDSIECK Brut Reserve $40
TAITTINGER Brut Reserve $50

■ **More than $16 — Vintage**

BOLLINGER Grande Année 1985 ..... $80 *(A)*
VEUVE CLICQUOT PONSARDIN Brut 1985 ..... $65 *(B)*
YALUMBA 'D' 1990 ..... $23 *(A)*
$$ **ROSEMOUNT** Brut 1991 ..... $15.50
RANDALL Sauvage 1991 ..... $21 *(A)*

(A) The manufacturer says it's no longer available, but we found stock in shops in September.
(B) Now only available in half-bottle or magnum sizes.

PERSONAL CD PLAYERS
(March 1995)

Although personal CD players can't be used when you're jogging (the movement makes the players jump), it can be very handy to have movable music — and walking with them is generally OK. To find out how much it's worth forking out for a personal CD player, we tested seven of the cheapest players on the market plus two of the most expensive.

While the **TECHNICS SL-XP470** achieved the best overall score, and includes extra features such as a 'digital signal processor', the **SONY D-131** did almost as well and was more than $200 cheaper.

WHAT TO BUY

TECHNICS SL-XP470 ..... $500 *(A)*
SONY D-131 ..... $230 *(A)*
SONY D-335 ..... $700
TECHNICS SL-XP170 ..... $250 *(A)*

(A) The manufacturer says it's no longer available, but we found stock in shops in September.

TELEVISIONS
(April 1995)

Q. What's square, black and good value for money?

A. A mid-sized television.

In a test of 14 televisions with 51 cm screens, CHOICE found 11 that were good enough to recommend.

If you think TVs are getting bigger, you're right. Models with 51 cm screens are slowly overtaking 48 cm sets as leaders in the market for mid-sized televisions. The main advantage of 51 cm models (apart from a slightly bigger screen) is that most have a flatter, squarer tube, which should cause less distortion and reflection.

The **GOLDSTAR** was the top performer, but all the models listed below performed well in our tests of picture quality, sound quality and ease of use.

WHAT TO BUY

	GOLDSTAR CA-21A90B	$650
	SHARP CX 51B2	$700 *(A)*
equal	**MITSUBISHI** CT-21AM1	$700
	PANASONIC TC-21E1A	$750 *(A)*
	SANYO C21PM10	$700 *(A)*
equal	**SAMSUNG** CB-5322	$660 *(A)*
	SONY KV-2185AS	$800 *(A)*
	HITACHI CPT2167	$700
equal	**NEC** FS-5180	$700
	PHILIPS 21GR1261-75R	$700 *(A)*
	AKAI CT-2104A	$600

(A) The manufacturer says it's no longer available, but we found stock in shops in September.

COLOUR PRINT FILM
(June 1995)

It'll soon be Christmas, and people are bound to start pointing cameras at you. If your likeness is going to be recorded this festive season, choose a film that will give you the most flattering result.

We looked at the most popular 35 mm colour print films for amateur use on the Australian market. The films were tested by taking photos in a variety of situations — indoors and outdoors. No one film is ideal for all circumstances, so we looked at four different types — slow, standard, medium and fast. Although some films performed better than others, they were all adequate, so if price is your main concern see the table in the original article.

WHAT TO BUY

	■ Slow film (ISO 50):	
equal	**KONICA** Impresa	$10 *(A)*
	AGFACOLOR Ultra	$9.50
	■ Standard film (ISO 100):	
	KODAK Gold III	$6.50
	■ Medium film (ISO 200):	
	KODAK Gold III	$7.50
	■ Fast film (ISO 400):	
	KODAK Gold III	$8

(A) This film is available but very hard to find.

PORTABLE STEREOS
(January 1995)

The ghetto blaster has gone bourgeois, so CHOICE tested portable stereos with a CD player. We selected those that could be bought for around $400. Apart from the standard features of CD player and AM/FM radio, some stereos had detachable speakers, and most had two cassette decks.

All the stereos tested had good sound quality for the price (though the bass varied). The **JVC** was the overall top performer, with equal best sound quality, but it only has a single cassette deck. The **PANASONIC RX-DT401** was the best dual-cassette model, and was also the easiest to use. If you want a model with detachable speakers, go for the **PANASONIC RX-DT600** or the **SONY**.

WHAT TO BUY

	JVC RC-X320	$400 *(A)*
	PANASONIC RX-DT401	$400 *(A)*
equal	**PANASONIC** RX-DT600	$400
	SONY CFD-550	$400
	SHARP CD550E	$400

(A) The manufacturer says it's no longer available, but we found stock in shops in September.

CARS

CAR CD ADAPTORS
(March 1995)

Car CD adaptors allow you to play CDs on a personal CD player through your car's existing stereo system. CHOICE looked at two models, which used different methods to achieve this. One, the **DISCWASHER**, operates through your car's cassette player and speakers; the other, the **SOUND FEEDER**, uses an FM modulator that's plugged into the car's cigarette lighter, and you use the player by tuning your car radio to the modulator's frequency.

Both CD players suffered mistracking problems caused by being bounced around, and tended to slide around the passenger seat. We found the **DISCWASHER** had slightly better sound quality, was simpler to use and was cheaper than the **SOUND FEEDER**.

PRODUCTS TESTED

DISCWASHER	$24.95
SOUND FEEDER	$49.95

KITCHEN

DISHWASHERS
(April 1995)

Dishwashers these days use less water and energy than they used to. However, with some of them it's difficult to load the claimed number of place settings without plates and dishes 'nesting' into each other. Non-standard items like pans and tall glasses can also be hard to fit in.

Although the best four machines were close to equal on overall scores for their normal cycles, they offer different advantages. The **MIELE** gave a good washing performance and was the easiest to use, but it's the most expensive. The **AEG** had very good water and energy efficiency scores (and so low running costs), but only produced an average washing performance.

WHAT TO BUY

	MIELE G 572	$1699
	AEG Oko Favorit 676	$1350
equal	**BLANCO** BDW 203	$1150
	BOSCH SMS 4012	$1100

COOKTOPS
(June 1995)

A cooktop (teamed with a wall oven) is an alternative to the more traditional upright stove. One advantage of a cooktop is versatility — you can put the cooktop and wall oven where they best fit, and choose different brands and fuels if you like. A disadvantage is that the combination generally works out to be more expensive than an upright stove.

We looked at glass ceramic cooktops under $1000 that had four electric elements and inbuilt controls. None of the ones we tested had halogen elements. Because they all had similar components and construction, and all performed well in cooking tests, we ranked them on the basis of their ease of use. We checked how easy they are to clean, how clear and safe the controls are, and the effectiveness of the heat indicator — which shows you whether elements are still hot.

WHAT TO BUY

equal	**AEG** 6299 K	$999
	BOSCH NKT662NBGB	$969
	SMEG SA604WH	$960
	WESTINGHOUSE PHE284W	$809
	SIMPSON 64A985CW*00	$739
	FISHER & PAYKEL CT 5F	$705
	SIMPSON 64A996W*00	$789
equal	**CHEF** EHCFSW	$700
	OMEGA OA4CER/1 K	$790

CHILDREN

CHILD CAR RESTRAINTS
(April 1995)

All the child car restraints on the market in Australia meet the requirements of the Australian Standard, which is one of the strictest in the world. However, the models we recommended performed better than the others in crash testing beyond the standard's requirements, and in ease of use.

We looked at four types of restraint — rearward-facing infant restraints, forward-facing child restraints, models that were convertible between the two, and booster seats. The only rearward-facing restraint we could recommend was the **SAFE-N-SOUND Baby Safety Capsule.**

The forward-facing restraints performed much better than the booster seats tested, so it's sensible for children to use this kind of restraint for as long as they can still fit into it. The two restraints we recommended performed equally well in the simulated crash tests. We couldn't recommend any of the convertibles we tested.

Booster seats offered the lowest level of protection, especially in side impacts. We advised against using backless booster cushions or the **CARESSE** soft-foam seat with a back. The other booster seats were rated equal.

WHAT TO BUY

■ Rearward-facing infant restraints

	SAFE-N-SOUND Baby Safety Capsule	$140

■ Forward-facing restraints

	SAFE-N-SOUND Series 3 (2nd Edition) Recliner	$140
equal	**SAFE-N-SOUND** Eclipse *(A)*	$100

■ Booster seats/cushions

	KIDDY-SAFE	$49
equal	**KLIPPAN** Easy Rider	$69.95
	SAFE-N-SOUND Cruiser	$160
	SAFE-N-SOUND Travel-Safe	$75

(A) This seat's now called the Safe-n-sound Eclipse Economy. It is technically the same as the Eclipse, but has no recline mechanism.

HIGH CHAIRS
(September 1995)

The chairs we looked at are not only 'high' chairs, but high-low chairs — they can be adjusted to different heights to suit the needs of parents and children. Some chairs can only be adjusted to two positions — high and low — while others can be used at a range of heights. A number of the chairs can also be hooked onto the edge of a table, but for safety reasons we don't recommend you use the hook-on option.

We tested the chairs for safety, versatility and ease of use. When shopping for any type of high chair, bear in mind two key factors: safety and practicality. We came up with three recommended chairs, and another four which we think are OK to buy if you can't find the top three.

WHAT TO BUY

■ Recommended

	CAM Alfa S164	$150
equal	**GERRY** Adjust-A-Height 385	$199
	STEELCRAFT Monaco 31011	$179

■ OK if you can't find the top three

	BABY TREND Home and Roam 8236	$179
	CHICCO New Lift Highchair 64907	$199
equal	**FISHER-PRICE** Adjustable High Chair 9158	$275 *(A)*
	PEG PEREGO Baby Boy	$199

(A) This price is based on nationwide checks in June 1995, but the manufacturer tells us it may be in the shops for a lower price now.

COMMUNICATIONS

COLOUR INKJET PRINTERS
(October 1995)

Colour inkjet printers work by spraying droplets of ink onto the page. We tested 10 printers with an A4 paper feeder that can be used with PC-compatible (IBM-compatible) computers, and can be bought for under $1100. Printers in the *What to buy* list below also come in Macintosh-compatible versions.

You need to make sure you get a cable and printer driver suitable for your type of computer (a driver lets your computer 'talk' to your printer). New drivers are now available for the two OLIVETTIs we tested, which improve their graphics performance significantly.

Some of the printers use just the three primary colours (red, blue and yellow) to make black. If you regularly want to print a combination of black text and colour images, a better choice is a printer that has a separate black cartridge as well as the three primary colours (all the models listed below have this).

The printers' performance, in terms of speed and quality for both graphics and text, varied considerably. The fastest printers don't always produce the best-quality results, and vice versa.

WHAT TO BUY

■ If you want very good-quality text and graphics printing and don't mind slower printing times:

	HEWLETT-PACKARD DeskJet 660C	$825

■ If you want good-quality printing at reasonable speeds:

	CANON BJC-4000	$700
	EPSON Stylus Color	$800

■ If you want good-quality printing at reasonable speeds *plus* portability:

	CANON BJC-70	$600

FAX MACHINES
(August 1995)

Three-in-one fax machines are convenient for people working out of home or a small office because they combine a fax, phone and answering machine in a single self-contained unit. And they work off one phone line — the machine automatically works out what type of call is coming through.

We looked at three-in-one thermal-paper models. Thermal paper is chemically treated and heat-sensitive, and tends to be more brittle and fade more quickly than plain paper. Although some of the machines can take plain-paper-quality thermal paper, plain-paper fax machines generally cost more.

We evaluated the machines on the basis of their speed, the quality of transmitted and received faxes containing photographs, and finally their ease of use (including the usefulness of the instruction manual).

WHAT TO BUY

	BROTHER FAX-490mc	$950
equal	**SAMSUNG** SF2500	$850 *(A)*
	SHARP FO-435	$850

(A) The manufacturer says it's no longer available, but we found stock in shops in September.

A wee dram for Christmas?

But which scotch should you buy? Are the 'cheapie' brands any good? Are the premium blends worth paying for? We put more than 60 scotches to the taste test to find out which ones experts rate the best.

Price seems to be a good indication of a blended scotch's quality, but that's not true for single malts, which are more a case of individual preference.

THERE ARE OVER 80 SCOTCHES on the Australian market, ranging from 'price fighters' at less than $20, up to the premium blends and single malts — but to do a tasting we had to draw the line somewhere. So we decided to concentrate on the lower end of the market plus some well-known single malts.

We divided the scotches into four categories: 'price fighters' under $20, 'standard' blends between $20 and $35, a handful of 'premium' blends up to $45, and single malts up to $60 — though some prices have since gone up.

Our expert tasters were aware of these categories and rated the scotches within them — in other words they compared apples with apples. So, for example, a four-star rating for a 'standard' blend is very good within its category, but can't be directly compared with a four-star 'premium' blend.

For the first three categories, which are all blended whiskies, price was a fairly good indication of quality. But for single malts, which are very individual in taste, price won't help you choose.

THE LUCKY TASTERS

We asked six scotch experts (see *Thanks to our expert panel* on page 15) to score the whiskies on a five-star rating scale, taking into account appearance, nose (smell) and palate (taste). Generally the tasters gave similar scores for each particular scotch, and we have rated them accordingly. If the experts couldn't agree, we put a scotch into a separate category called 'mixed emotions' (see the tables on pages 16–18) — if you're feeling adventurous, try one and make your own judgment.

A panel of eight non-experts who enjoy scotch (four men, four women), tasted several whiskies from each category, to see if their opinions varied greatly from the experts'. This lay panel rated the scotches on a scale of 'like a lot' to 'dislike a lot' .

It was generally agreed, by both the expert tasters and our lay panel, that among the premium blends and single-malt whiskies all the brands were good. So their final score indicates whether a scotch has wide appeal, not that its quality is better or worse.

INDIVIDUALITY

No two scotches are the same — each has its own unique characteristics. While the basic ingredients and methods used to make them may be the same, the source of water, the amount of peat, even the seaweed smell in the local winds can all influence a scotch's final style.

However, in Scotland it's generally accepted that whiskies from particular regions exhibit similar styles. These regions include the Highlands, the Lowlands and the islands. Highland whiskies, for example, are known to have light to medium malt and little peat, whereas Lowland whiskies are light on malt but heavier on peat. We've noted the origin of single malts in the table.

Scotland might be the first that comes to mind, but it isn't the only famous whisky-producing country. Other whiskies include:

- Bourbon, made from rye and corn in Bourbon County in Kentucky, and in Tennessee, Illinois and Indiana in the US.
- Canadian whisky, also made from rye and corn, which uses a barrel-blending distilling method.
- Irish whiskey, which doesn't use a peat fire and is distilled three times.
- Welsh whisky — a mix of scotches filtered through herbs.
- Japanese whisky — similar to scotch but less 'peaty'.

In the US, whisky producers have been successfully developing the younger market for 18 to 30-year-olds by producing pre-mixed cans of bourbon and cola. Scottish producers have seen the point of this more recently and are doing the same in an attempt to revitalise their market.

WHICH ARE THE BEST?

From the cheapies through to single malts:

■ **'Price fighters' (under $20):** Experts and the lay panel agreed that the best place for all these scotches is with mixers — they were hard-pushed to recommend any of them as a straight drink. The best two — as ranked by the expert panel — were **JOHN SAMSON** and **McCALLUM'S.**

■ The **'standard' blends** cost $20 to $35 — equal top scorers were **J & B RARE** and **WHITE HEATHER.** Interestingly, the popular **BLACK DOUGLAS,** which our lay panel liked best of the 'standard' blends they tasted, was not rated very highly by the experts.

■ Four scotches in the **'premium' blend** category rated equally well, but of those, the lay panel really enjoyed **GRANT'S Rare Old Scotch Whisky** at $36.

■ The **single malts** are more individual, and not surprisingly opinions varied. For the expert panel **LAGAVULIN** stood out as the best (it was the only scotch in the test to score the maximum of five stars), followed by **THE MACALLAN** and **BOWMORE.** The lay panel enjoyed **THE MACALLAN** the most, making it our overall recommendation in this group — although at $65 (when we checked prices in late September) it might be one for special occasions only. **THE GLENLIVET** is considerably cheaper at $48, and though the expert panel had mixed emotions about it (they either loved it or hated it) the lay panel thought it was very good.

Christmas is a good time for special offers — shopping around for a good price on a scotch that's usually expensive could be worthwhile.

CHOICE TOP TEN

We singled out the best 10 scotches (see right) across the $20 to $60 (when we bought) price range, as judged by our expert tasters. The exception is **THE GLENLIVET,** which the experts had mixed emotions about but our lay panel loved. On the other hand, the lay panel was less enthusiastic about **LAGAVULIN,** so we've included them both.

Remember the star ratings are only comparable within each category, not between them.

What is whisky?

Whisk(e)y originated in Ireland in the fifth century AD and was known as *uisge beatha,* Gaelic for 'water of life'. It was later introduced to Scotland, where it was adopted wholeheartedly and became the national drink. For a whisky to be known as 'scotch', it must have been distilled at least twice and matured in Scotland.

There are two kinds of scotch — pure malt and blended. Malt whiskies are made from malted barley and may be single or vatted. Single malts are produced by one distillery only, which blends malt whiskies of various ages to create the final product. Vatted malts are a mix of single-malt whiskies originating from different distilleries.

Grain whisky was only introduced in the 19th century, when a new distillation process was invented that made whisky from a mix of malted barley and unmalted grains such as corn. The final product, a combination of up to 50 different malt and grain whiskies, is called blended whisky.

The age of a scotch, usually stated on the label, is based on the 'youngest' ingredient in the bottle. So in an eight-year-old scotch, the youngest whisky added to the final product is eight years old.

HOW IS SCOTCH MADE?

There are several steps to producing scotch, including malting, mashing, fermentation, distillation, maturation and blending.

■ **Malting** is the germination process that occurs when barley is 'steeped', or mixed with warm water. The water is then drained and the wet barley spread out on floors, where it continues to germinate for about a week before being dried by heat and smoke in a kiln. The smoke often decides the final taste of the scotch — if a lot of peat is used in the fire, it will have a distinctly 'peaty' flavour.

■ The barley is then **mashed** — put through a mill to break the shell and mixed with water to convert the barley's soluble starches into a sugary liquid.

'Standard' blends

J&B RARE

Price: $29

Taste rating: ★★★★

Comment: Nice malt; a pleasant light scotch.

WHITE HEATHER

Price: $29

Taste rating: ★★★★

Comment: Sweet malt and peat, with character.

'Premium' blends

CHIVAS REGAL

Price: $49

Taste rating: ★★★★

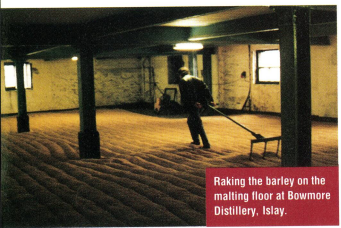
Comment: Lively palate, smooth malt and oak; an interesting style.

GRANT'S RARE OLD SCOTCH WHISKY

Price: $36

Taste rating: ★★★★

Comment: Sweet malt, strong spirit, some oak; a bit heavy, but a generous style.



Raking the barley on the malting floor at Bowmore Distillery, Islay.

Fermentation with yeast follows over a two-day period. The yeast onverts the sugars to alcohol, then the whole mixture is **distilled** twice o concentrate the alcohol. The process for preparing unmalted grain — uch as corn or rye — is similar, but the grain is put through a ifferent mashing process and distilled in a different type of still.

The next stage is **maturation**, where the whisky is stored in oak arrels and mellowed. Scotch must be matured for a minimum of three ears, while bourbon is usually aged a minimum of four years. A premium' scotch is one that has matured for between 10 and 15 years, hen a scotch is believed to reach perfection. However, unlike wines, nce a whisky has been bottled, the aging process stops, so keeping a ottle for years before opening it will not improve its taste or value. lso, whisky can go 'off', so finish it within 12 months of opening the ottle.

Blending is the combining of various malt and grain whiskies to make blended whisky.

Thanks to our expert panel

For this report we brought together a tasting panel of experts from a range of backgrounds (clockwise from top left):

Kim Layton
(from United Distillers),
John Stanford
(wine and spirits writer, and consultant),
Mark Shield
(wine and spirits writer),
Michael Lawrence
(wine and spirits writer, and consultant),
Norm Case
(wine and spirits retailer),
Peter Duly
(wine and spirits retailer).

Single malts

JOHNNIE WALKER BLACK LABEL
Price: $50
Taste rating: ★★★★
Comment: Complex malt, tangy wood; a bit heavy but nice.

TEACHER'S ROYAL HIGHLAND
Price: $58
Taste rating: ★★★★
Comment: Great depth, strong alcohol, firm malt; a pleasant whisky.

LAGAVULIN
Price: $57
Taste rating: ★★★★★
Comment: Dominant peat, firm wood; 'seaweed' nose; powerful full flavour.

THE MACALLAN
Price: $65
Taste rating: ★★★★½
Comment: Full-bodied, rich, malt throughout palate; "balls and all!"

BOWMORE
Price: $51
Taste rating: ★★★★½
Comment: Sweet malt, peat and oak mixed in; rich and smoky.

THE GLENLIVET
Price: $48
Taste rating: ★★★½
Comment: Sweet malt and oak, hot spirit; attractive style.

Scotch

Brand	1 Age (years)	2 Volume (mL)	3 Alc/Vol (%)	3 Bottled in	4 Price ($)	5 Expert score (rounded)	5 Lay panel verdict	6 Description/comments
BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY: 'PRICE FIGHTERS' — $17–$19*								
JOHN SAMSON	ns	700	37	Australia	17	★★★★	Dislike	Amber colour, malt and grain nose, oily, sweet malt palate, hot spirit. Neither light nor heavy.
McCALLUM'S Perfection	ns	700	37	Australia	19	★★★★	Dislike	Gold colour, malt nose with a hint of smoke, mild flavour with malt and light peat, touch of oak. Well balanced, light and easy to drink.
CARLTON CLUB	ns	700	37	Australia	20	★★★½		Deep amber colour, soapy/malty/new wood nose, sweet malt in palate, but spirit needs integration. Heavy.
CLAN MACGREGOR	ns	700	37	Australia	20	★★★½		Gold colour, sweet/caramel/oak nose, malt palate. Doesn't quite deliver.
CLUNY	ns	700	37	Australia	20	★★★½		Amber colour, oak and spirity nose, some malt on palate. Pleasant but better as a mixer.
MACLEAY DUFF	ns	700	37	Australia	21	★★★½		Amber colour, sweet nose with touch of oak, sweet malt on palate but short in length. Harmless.
OLD SMUGGLER	ns	700	37	New Zealand	22	★★★½		Gold colour, spirit on nose, middleweight flavour with slight malt. Neither light nor heavy.
CROWN RESERVE	ns	700	37	Australia	20	★★★		Amber colour, spirit and light malt on nose, simple palate. Light style.
HEATHER MIST	ns	700	37	Australia	18	★★★		Straw colour, malt/dust/dank aroma, light palate with hot short finish. Pleasant.
ROYAL CREST	ns	750	37	Australia	20	★★★		Amber colour, malt/spirit/leathery nose, sweet palate with touch of oak. Clean, light.
MIXED EMOTIONS								
HIGHLAND QUEEN	ns	700	37.1	Australia	18	★★★		Amber colour, woody/slightly off nose, some malt and soft spirit on palate. Average.
VAT 69	ns	700	37	Australia	21	★★★	OK	Tawny colour, slightly burnt/beef stock/sweet malt nose, malt and oak palate with warn spirit. Not remarkable.
PRINCE OF WALES	ns	700	37.1	Australia	19	★★½	Dislike a lot	Gold colour, grain/wet paper nose, simple, smooth palate. Unimposing.

ns not stated

* The scotches were selling for these prices when we bought them for tasting. Some prices have changed since then, but we have left them in the category in which they were tasted.

1 Age

Whisky must be matured a minimum of three years before it can be called scotch, and between 10 and 15 years for it to be considered 'premium' (see *How is scotch made?* on page 14). In recent years many scotch producers have started placing less emphasis on age, in an attempt to broaden their market base.

2 Volume

In 1994, in what appeared to be an attempt to indirectly increase the price of scotch, many suppliers switched to a reduced bottle size — from the traditional 750 mL to 700 mL.

3 Alcohol percentage/Bottled in

All scotch is produced in Scotland, but its alcohol volume can vary according to where it has been bottled. Scotch bottled in Scotland has a minimum of 40% alcohol, whereas that bottled in Australia is usually diluted with water to 37%, probably to avoid the extra alcohol tax (see *A scotch ain't scotch without 40% alcohol* on page 18).

4 Price

We surveyed major liquor stores in late September for the average price of the scotches tested. When buying scotch, keep in mind that around Christmas many stores offer discounts on normal prices.

5 Scores: experts and the lay panel

Our expert panel scored the whiskies within their categories on a five-star rating scale, which may be interpreted as follows:

★: Poor.
★★: Fair.
★★★: Good.
★★★★: Very good.
★★★★★: Outstanding.

Our lay panel of eight people rated the scotches from 'like a lot' to 'dislike a lot' ('OK' is in the middle). They didn't taste all the scotches, just the ones the experts rated highly or about which they had mixed emotions, plus a few very popular brands.

6 Description/comments

The expert panel took into consideration three key factors to rate the scotches — colour, nose (smell) and palate (taste). They also gave an overall comment. This is what they looked for:

- Colour includes clarity and depth and can range from pale gold to dark amber.
- In expert terms, the nose can be simple or complex, integrated or unbalanced. It may have a strong malt or peat fragrance, a seaweed or medicinal quality, shades of oak, or even a caramel tendency.
- The palate can also be simple or complex; it may be hot and spirity or smooth and mellow. It can be light or heavy, oily or syrupy, and the final flavour may or may not linger in the mouth. How the peat and malt content balances is also considered.
- Overall, the comment usually looks at whether a certain characteristic dominates, such as peat or sweet malt, whether the style is light, medium or heavy, and the influence of age.

Brand	1 Age (years)	2 Volume (mL)	3 Alc/Vol (%)	3 Bottled in	4 Price ($)	5 Expert score (rounded)	5 Lay panel verdict	6 Description/comments
'STANDARD' BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY — $20–$35*								
J & B Rare	ns	700	40	Scotland	29	★★★★	OK	Straw colour, sweet fruity/malt nose, sweet malt on soft palate. Pleasant and light.
WHITE HEATHER Special Reserve	ns	700	40	Scotland	29	★★★★	OK	Deep amber colour, earth/wood/smoky/malt nose, sweet malt and peat on lingering palate. Has character.
100 PIPERS	ns	700	37	Australia	22	★★★½		Warm amber colour, dusty/malt nose, peat/malt/caramel/hot butter long palate. Pleasant.
DEWAR'S White Label	ns	700	40	Australia	29	★★★½		Medium amber, fruit/malt/caramel smell, sweet malt and touch of caramel on palate but hot and dry finish. Not memorable.
HAIG	ns	700	37	Australia	20	★★★½		Warm gold, floral/heathery/sweet malt nose, sweet palate with high spirit. Neither light nor heavy.
HANKEY BANNISTER	ns	700	40	Scotland	20	★★★½		Bright amber colour, sweet caramel and malt nose, sweet malt with rich oak flavour. Integrated but a bit heavy.
JOHNNIE WALKER Red Label	ns	700	40	Scotland	28	★★★½	OK	Gold colour, sweet fruit and oak nose, pleasant malt and spice on palate but lifted spirit. One of the many good average whiskies.
LANGS Supreme	5	750	37.1	Australia	22	★★★½		Amber, attractive oak and malt, full-flavoured. Alcohol predominates.
SCOTS GREY De Luxe	ns	700	40	Scotland	21	★★★½		Medium amber, malt/spice/mild caramel nose, some malt and oak on palate with spirited finish. Neither light nor heavy.
TEACHER'S Highland Cream	ns	700	40	Scotland	25	★★★½		Deep gold colour, malt/oak smell, sweet malt and oak flavour but a bit hot. Neither light nor heavy.
BALLANTINE'S Finest	ns	700	40	Scotland	26	★★★		Gold colour, malt/oak/caramel/spirit nose, sweet malt palate with hot finish. Slightly out of balance.
BELL'S Extra Special	8	700	37	Australia	24	★★★	OK	Gold colour, grainy/oaky/oily/malty nose, pleasant malt, some peat and oak on integrated palate. Easy drinking.
CLAN CAMPBELL	ns	700	40	Scotland	23	★★★		Bright amber, caramel and malt nose, little malt and soft spirit on palate. Neither light nor heavy.
CLAN STUART Deluxe Blend	ns	750	37.1	Australia	24	★★★		Gold colour, malt/popcorn/smoky nose, hot finish/spirit apparent in palate. Pleasant.
CROWN RESERVE Special De Luxe	8	700	37	Australia	21	★★★		Copper colour, fruity/sweet/spirit nose, mild malt and hint of oak on palate, which has reasonable length. A little bland.
GRANT'S Family Reserve	ns	700	37	Australia	23	★★★		Gold colour, malt nose, soft malt and touch of wood or peat on palate, but hot spirit. A bit out of balance.
KING GEORGE IV	ns	700	37	Australia	19	★★★		Amber colour, light malt/soft citrus/caramel/celery/spirit nose, medium-body palate with hot spirit. Light.
PINWINNIE Royale	ns	700	40	Scotland	35	★★★		Light amber, sweet malt nose, mellow malt on gentle palate. Light.
THE BLACK DOUGLAS De Luxe	ns	700	37	Australia	25	★★★	Like	Medium amber colour, sweet caramel/straw nose, sweet malt on palate but hot finish. Light, sippable.
THE FAMOUS GROUSE	ns	700	40	Scotland	25	★★★		Medium amber colour, salty/rubber/malt nose, rich flavour with warm spirit. Neither light nor heavy.
WHYTE & MACKAY Special Reserve	ns	700	40	Scotland	26	★★★		Mid-amber colour, coffee/caramel/malt nose, some malt on muted palate. Attractive but not distinctive.
'PREMIUM' BLENDED SCOTCH WHISKY — $36–$45 *								
CHIVAS REGAL	12	700	43	Scotland	49	★★★★	Like	Medium amber, fruity malt nose, sweet smooth malt and oak on palate. Interesting style.
GRANT'S Rare Old Scotch Whisky	12	750	40	Scotland	36	★★★★	Like a lot	Deep amber, malt and mild peat aromas, sweet malt with peat and integrated oak on palate. A bit heavy but generous.
JOHNNIE WALKER Black Label	12	700	43	Scotland	50	★★★★	Like	Medium amber colour, attractive fruit and malt nose, complex malt palate but a bit hot and short. A bit heavy but nice.
TEACHER'S Royal Highland	12	750	43	Scotland	58	★★★★	OK	Gold colour, sweet malt and oak aromas, full malt and strong alcohol. Pleasant.
BALLANTINE'S Gold Seal	12	750	43	Scotland	56	★★★½	Like a lot	Medium amber colour, some malt and spirit on nose, mellow malt and smooth oak on palate. Light.
LANGS Select	12	750	43	Scotland	48	★★★½	Like	Gold colour, malt and wood nose, big malt but alcohol predominates. Neither light nor heavy.

ns not stated

* The scotches were selling for these prices when we bought them for tasting. Some prices have changed since then, but we have left them in the category in which they were tasted.

Scotch

Brand (origin)	Age (years)	Volume (mL)	Alc/Vol (%)	Bottled in	Price ($)	5 Expert score (rounded)	5 Lay panel verdict	6 Description/comments
SINGLE MALT WHISKY — $45–$60*								
LAGAVULIN (Islay)	16	700	43	Scotland	57	★★★★★	OK	Deep gold colour, peat and seaweed nose, powerful and smoky palate with dry finish. Well balanced but heavy.
BOWMORE (Islay)	ns	700	40	Scotland	51	★★★★½	Like	Gold colour, honey and seaweed peat nose, sweet malt and peat with rich smoke on palate. Heavy but mellow.
THE MACALLAN (Highland)	12	700	43	Scotland	65	★★★★½	Like a lot	Deep amber colour, sherrywood/smoky nose, full flavoured and rich palate with malt throughout, although a bit hot. Has strength.
ABERLOUR (Highland)	10	700	40	Scotland	52	★★★★		Medium amber, sweet wood on nose, full malt and peat on long palate. Pleasant.
CARDHU (Highland)	12	700	43	Scotland	50	★★★★		Light straw colour, smoky/fruity/sweet nose, sweet malt palate with hot spirit. Easy to appreciate.
GLENFARCLAS (Highland)	12	700	43	Scotland	63	★★★★		Medium amber colour, malt and sherry wood aromas, spirity sweet malt palate. Neither light nor heavy.
HIGHLAND PARK (Orkney Islands)	12	700	40	Scotland	45	★★★★		Medium amber colour, burnt orange/sherry oak nose, nice malt and peat palate with a short finish. Neither light nor heavy.
TALISKER (Isle of Skye)	10	750	45.8	Scotland	60	★★★★		Medium amber, sweet malt and seaweed nose, peat and smoke in palate with spirit apparent. For those who like peat.
THE BALVENIE Founder's Reserve (Highland)	10	750	43	Scotland	55	★★★★		Medium amber colour, sweet honey and malt nose, pleasant malt and crisp wood on palate. Light.
THE DALMORE (Highland)	12	700	43	Scotland	48	★★★★		Deep gold colour, toffee/smoky/peat/malt nose, sweet malt and good peat on palate, but strong spirit. Pleasant.
CRAGGANMORE (Speyside)	12	750	40	Scotland	60	★★★½		Mid gold colour, no distinct bouquet, peat and dry malt with spirit on palate. Light.
GLENFIDDICH (Speyside)	ns	700	43	Scotland	49	★★★½	Like	Pale straw colour, sweet malt and peat nose, light malt with some oak and hot spirit on palate. One to have before dinner.
GLENGOYNE (Highland)	12	750	43	Scotland	46	★★★½		Light amber colour, smoky/sweet/floral/malt nose, sweet malt with dry oak and back spirit on palate. Light.
GLENKINCHIE (Lowland)	10	750	43	Scotland	60	★★★½		Light amber colour, sweet malt/wood/oak nose, palate dry and a bit hot but good malt. Balanced.
OBAN (West Highland)	ns	750	43	Scotland	60	★★★½		Medium amber colour, honey/sweet/floral nose, sweet light malt with some smoke on palate. Well balanced.
TAMDHU (Speyside)	ns	700	40	Scotland	40	★★★½		Mid gold colour, nice sherry/sweet smell, sweet malt and warm spirit on palate. Neither light nor heavy.
AUCHENTOSHAN (Lowland)	ns	700	40	Scotland	50	★★★	Like	Light straw colour, malt and wood nose, oak distinct in spirity palate. Dry but light.
DALWHINNIE (Highland)	15	750	43	Scotland	60	★★★	OK	Gold colour, wood/smoky/fruity sweet nose, spicy but mild malt palate with fine spirit. Neither light nor heavy.
MIXED EMOTIONS								
THE GLENLIVET (Highland)	12	700	40	Scotland	48	★★★½	Like a lot	Gold colour, honey/heather/spice/malt nose, sweet malt with hot spirit on short palate. Light.

ns not stated

* The scotches were selling for these prices when we bought them for tasting. Some prices have changed since then, but we have left them in the category in which they were tasted.

A scotch ain't scotch without 40% alcohol

Currently, scotch produced in Scotland but bottled in Australia usually contains only 37% alcohol, while scotch bottled in the UK has a minimum of 40% alcohol. To scotch connoisseurs, anything less than 40% is sacrilege — they believe the scotch-like character and quality are reduced by lower volumes of alcohol.

However, in Australia drinks with 40% alcohol attract a higher tax than those with 37%. So the benefits to Australian bottlers of a lower level of alcohol are obvious: less tax means lower retail prices and increased sales.

Nevertheless, the Scotch Whisky Association (SWA), based in Edinburgh, approached the National Food Authority (NFA) in 1991, asking it to change the Australian Food Standards Code to define scotch as containing no less than 40% alcohol. The SWA wants scotch sold in Australia to qualify for domestic consumption in the UK — that way scotch bottled in Australia would be the same as that bottled in Scotland.

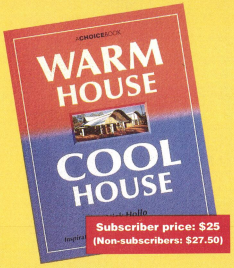
The NFA denied the application, but the SWA persisted. The case eventually ended up in court.

To cut a long story short, at the time of writing the Federal Court had decided in favour of the Scotch Whisky Association's application, and a draft of the new standard was being circulated for comment. If the draft becomes official, local distributors won't be able to call a whisky 'scotch' unless it meets the requirements of the UK's 1990 Scotch Whisky Order — which includes a minimum of 40% alcohol.

The CHOICE Guide to Cameras & Camcorders

This guide contains results of independent European tests of compact cameras, SLRs, camcorders, single-use cameras and accessories, almost all of which are available in Australia. With this guide, you'll be able to judge which features are worth having and which are just expensive gimmicks. You'll also find advice on photography and equipment.

Code: CGCC



Warm House Cool House

Inspirational designs for low-energy housing

Warm House Cool House gives a simple explanation of the principles of energy-efficient housing, with more than 110 examples from around Australia. Whether you're planning to renovate, build or buy, this book will offer you inspiration and ideas on how to make your house a comfortable, affordable and attractive place to live in all year round.

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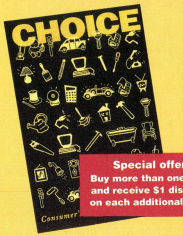


The Choice Consumers' Diary

Our popular diary returns for 1996. Conveniently sized (15 x 21.5 cm), it features: a week to an opening; a practical spiral binding that allows it to open flat on your desk; useful information, addresses and CHOICE consumer tips; monthly expense planners; and a section for names and addresses.

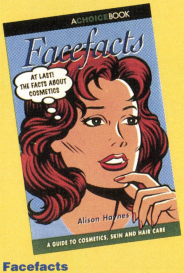
$15 Code: 1996

The CHOICE Guide to Baby Products

Third edition

The *CHOICE Guide to Baby Products* gives invaluable specific and general advice about what to look for (and look out for) when buying for your baby. It starts with a checklist of what parents will need when the baby arrives, and then gives reports of tests and surveys that have been carried out for CHOICE.

Code: CGBP

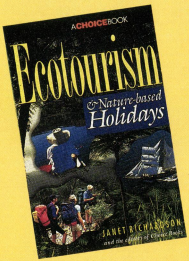


Facefacts

A guide to cosmetics, skin and hair care

What do we know about the stuff we put on our faces and our hair? How does it work? What do the 'special ingredients' actually do? This comprehensive guide answers these questions and covers many other issues, including how best to care for your skin.

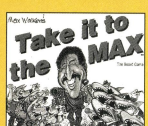
$18 Code: FF



Ecotourism & Nature-based Holidays

An innovative guide to a new sort of holiday. As well as explaining what ecotourism means, this guide gives you practical information about Australian tour operators, resorts and other attractions.

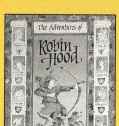
$17 Code: ENBH



Take it to the Max

Board games are social games, and this one is no exception. *Take it to the Max* requires players not only to answer general-knowledge questions (about Australia) but also to answer dilemma questions as either Max Walker (who is one of the authors) or themselves. A lot of fun for teenagers and adults.

$45 **Code: TITM**



The Adventures of Robin Hood

The latest title from the author/illustrator of the popular *Greek Myths*. The tales of Sherwood Forest are told in amusing comic style for young and not so young readers.

$20 **Code: TARH**

Everyday Machines

Amazing devices we take for granted

This amusing book explains (with a bit of artistic licence) how some of the things we use every day actually work. Some of the items included are the VCR, the vacuum cleaner and the doorbell. Said to be for ages 8–12, but we think that could be stretched a lot further.

$20 **Code: EDM**

ORDER FORM

Code	Title	Qty	Item price	Total price

Plus postage and handling ($3 for one item plus $1.20 for each extra item)

Total

I enclose: ☐ cheque ☐ money order (payable to the Australian Consumers' Association)

OR: I wish to pay by: ☐ Bankcard ☐ Mastercard ☐ Visa Expiry date: ____/____

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$3 for one item plus $1.20 for each extra item ordered. Some books may have to be sent separately to keep postage costs down. This is due to Australia Post's vagaries, not ours. Please allow 3 to 4 weeks for delivery. We process the vast majority of orders the day we receive them, but sometimes stock replenishment means a delay while we await delivery, so please bear with us. If any order cannot be filled for a substantial length of time, we'll let you know and give you the option of cancellation.

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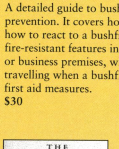
If you are not completely satisfied with your purchase, return book(s) within 30 days for full refund of the purchase price.

1M9512 INS

The Complete Australian Bushfire Book

A detailed guide to bushfires and their prevention. It covers how bushfires start, how to react to a bushfire, how to include fire-resistant features in your home, school or business premises, what to do if you're travelling when a bushfire threatens, and first aid measures.

$30 **Code: CABB**

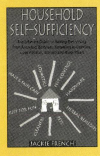


The Family Garden

How to create safe and attractive areas for all to enjoy

A garden for the family has to consider a lot of things: a range of ages and uses, the furniture, the plants, pets, and safety. This book provides inspiration and advice on getting the perfect garden for your family.

$35 **Code: FG**



Household Self Sufficiency

This guide tells you how to make just about anything you may ever need in your home, such as soap, candles, cosmetics, pottery and paints. They may or may not be the best, but you're sure to have a lot of fun developing your own goodies for around the house.

$17 Code: HHSS

Switch!

Home-based power, water and sewerage systems for the twenty-first century

The authors have a house powered by a home-made waterwheel and by the sun through photovoltaic cells; their water comes from a local creek. They share their knowledge of how to set up such systems, plus other green ideas. For rural dwellers.

$18 Code: SWIT

Let's Move!

An essential handbook for those moving home

Home selling and buying are the largest financial deals most of us will ever make — it's all too important to leave to chance. *Let's Move!* gives sensible, relevant advice about selling, buying, building and moving house. It includes useful checklists and addresses.

$17 Code: LM

Australian Guide to Getting Published

Sound advice on how to get published in Australia (but not how to write a bestseller!). It includes advice on presenting your manuscript, and the expectations of publishers and authors.

$15 Code: AGGP

Delivering the Goods

Developing sales and service excellence

This isn't just a book for frontline sales staff but for anyone who supplies goods or information. It presents clear, practical advice and checklists to help you and your company maintain and improve customer service.

$25 Code: DTG

Telecommuting

On the information highways

This easy-to-read book explains how you can use the rapidly developing information superhighway in your home, not only for pleasure but as a workstation. It explains how to set up a home office, the available technology, and how to avoid the drawbacks of telecommuting.

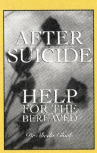
$15 Code: TOIH

Handling It

You and your long-term disease

This book aims to help people learn how they can best cope with long-term disease. The author, a journalist who herself was diagnosed with MS, has interviewed 40 people whose stories are inspirational and enlightening. It could also help relatives and friends who need to understand someone with a long-term disease or disability.

$17 Code: HI

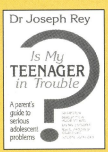


After Suicide

Help for the bereaved

When a person commits suicide no one knows what to say or when to say it. *After Suicide* is designed to help friends and family cope with this emotional situation. Its advice is easy to read and will help those left behind to resolve some of the issues that remain.

$15 Code: AS



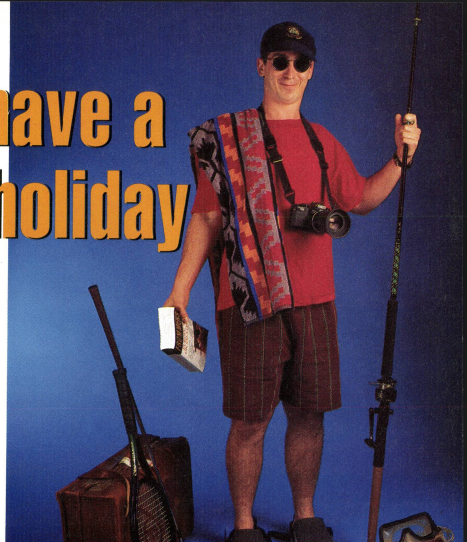
Is my Teenager in Trouble?

A parent's guide to serious adolescent problems

When does a 'difficult' teenager become a person with a real problem? This book is designed to help parents spot the signs. Some of the problem areas it covers are stress, phobias, eating disorders, school and suicidal behaviour.

$18 Code: IMTT

How to have a healthy holiday



You've bought your tickets and are ticking off the days till your long-planned holiday finally gets off the ground. But how much thought have you given to protecting your health while you're away?

ILLNESS CAN RUIN YOUR HOLIDAY, and some exotic diseases can even be life-threatening. Many of the 2.4 million Australians who travel overseas each year become ill while they're away, particularly if they visit a third-world country — up to 50% of travellers to developing countries report some kind of sickness.

Even a minor health problem — like diarrhoea — can be a major inconvenience when you're away from home and trying to have a good time. But you can often avoid sickness by taking some commonsense precautions. These include getting any vaccinations you need before you go, taking the appropriate antimalarial pills if they're necessary and watching what you eat and drink.

BE PREPARED!

It's wise to see your doctor for advice on medications and vaccinations you may need well before you head off overseas. If you're pregnant, have a chronic illness or are travelling with children, consult your GP for specific advice about your particular risks.

If you take regular medications, ask your doctor for a letter giving details of your condition and its treatment, including the generic names of the drugs you take (as brand names may be different overseas), the dose you need and the times you take them. This will not only provide information about your condition in case you need treatment while you're away, but will also help to avoid possible customs hassles over drugs in your luggage.

Make sure you take adequate supplies of your medications with you (perhaps one lot in your hand luggage and another in your case). Avoid buying medicines in foreign countries if possible — in developing countries it's not uncommon for drugs to be mislabelled or past their expiry date. (If you have to buy medications while you're away, purchase them from large stores in major cities or get them through a doctor.) And if you wear glasses, it's a good idea to take a spare pair, as well as your prescription.

You may want to take a medical kit with you. A basic kit might contain some mild painkillers (such as paracetamol), antiseptic swabs, ointment or solution, a stretch bandage, a few adhesive and non-adhesive dressings, scissors, tweezers, safety pins and possibly some medication for the temporary relief of diarrhoea. But what you take will probably vary according to your destination, individual needs and how far you'll be from medical care.

You can make up your own kit (check with your doctor what medications you may need) or buy one ready-made from special travellers' health centres (see page 24 for contact numbers). Don't forget to pack sunscreen and insect repellent too.

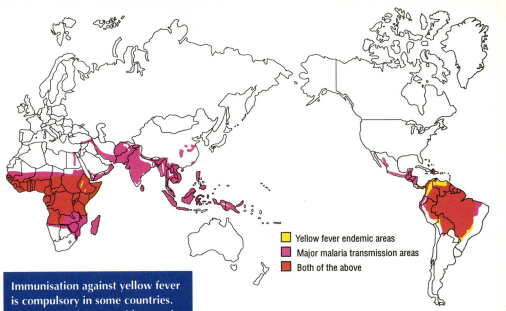
Vaccinations

FIND OUT WHETHER YOU SHOULD have any vaccinations well before you head off overseas. If you need any jabs, try to start the course at least four to six weeks before you go, as certain vaccines can't be given together, some require more than one injection and some take a couple of weeks to become effective.

The immunisations you need will depend on a number of factors, such as when and where you're going, the sort of travel you'll be doing (backpacking in rural areas vs staying in upmarket city hotels) and how long you'll be away, as well as your age, health and medications.

These days there are no compulsory travel vaccinations, except for yellow fever in some countries, but if you're travelling to a country with poor sanitation and hygiene, you may want to have some shots to help protect you against diseases like hepatitis A and typhoid, which are transmitted by faecally contaminated food or water.

Here's a run-down of some of the most common vaccinations. Remember to check the number of doses needed for each vaccine, as some clinics may quote prices per dose and not the total price.



Immunisation against yellow fever is compulsory in some countries. However, trying to avoid mosquito bites is an important way to prevent both it and malaria.

Source: IAMAT, March 1995

■ Hepatitis A

Infection with hepatitis A virus causes inflammation of the liver and can leave you weak, tired and unable to work for weeks or months. Gamma-globulin (a blood product) contains antibodies to the virus and will help protect you for three or six months depending on the dosage, but a more effective vaccine called Havrix (which isn't a blood product) is now available. Two Havrix injections give one year's protection, and a booster six to 12 months after the first one may be effective for up to 10 years. However, Havrix jabs are expensive — while gamma-globulin may be free of charge through your GP, each Havrix shot will generally cost at least $40. If you're over 50 or have lived in a developing country, you may already have antibodies to hepatitis A. Ask your doctor if a blood test is worthwhile to check if you can do without this vaccination.

■ Typhoid

Caused by *Salmonella typhi* bacteria, typhoid produces fever, diarrhoea or constipation, stomach pains and a rash. Vaccination does not provide full protection and is recommended only if you're travelling off the beaten track in an area where typhoid fever is prevalent, such as more remote areas of Asia, Africa, the Middle East, the Pacific Islands and Latin America. A single Typhim Vi injection gives three years' protection, while three tablets will protect you for one year.

■ Cholera

Cholera is spread by *Vibrio cholerae* bacteria and causes watery diarrhoea that can lead to dehydration and death if untreated. However, vaccination isn't recommended by the World Health Organization, as it isn't effective. No country officially requires immunisation against cholera (though a few countries, mainly in Africa, may do so unofficially — in these cases, some clinics will give you a small dose of vaccine and a cholera vaccination certificate). The best way to prevent cholera is to watch what you eat and drink.

■ Yellow fever

Immunisation against this mosquito-borne disease, endemic in many tropical countries of Africa and South America, is the only vaccination which may be compulsory for entry into some countries. It may also be required if you're simply passing through a yellow fever area. You may be asked to produce a certificate to prove you've been vaccinated against the disease within the last 10 years.

In Australia, only government-approved vaccination centres are permitted to give yellow-fever jabs. These include all the travel health clinics listed on page 24. For advice on other centres, contact your state or territory health authority (listed in the phone book).

■ Meningococcal meningitis

This bacterial infection of the lining of the brain is spread by carriers sneezing or coughing. You may want to have meningitis shots if you're planning to trek or live in Nepal, northern India, sub-Saharan Africa, Saudi Arabia, Brazil or Mongolia.

■ Rabies

In many countries outside Australia rabies is widespread in animals. You can catch it from an animal's bite or scratch, but immunisation with three jabs of this expensive vaccine is thought to be necessary only if you will be working with or handling animals while overseas. Don't take risks — avoid feeding or patting animals, no matter how cute and harmless they look.

■ Hepatitis B

Vaccination shots against hepatitis B (spread via blood and sexual contact) are generally recommended only if you're going to be living in a developing country for long periods — though you may be at high risk of hepatitis B (and other diseases, such as AIDS) if you have sex with local people, use injectable drugs or undergo tattooing or other sorts of skin piercing in these countries.

■ Routine immunisations

Everyone, whether travelling or not, should be up-to-date with vaccinations against diphtheria, tetanus and polio (booster doses are required every 10 years), as well as measles, mumps, rubella and whooping cough. If you aren't sure, check with your doctor.

PREVENTING MALARIA

Transmitted by anopheles mosquitoes, malaria is a potentially fatal illness and is a major problem in most tropical areas of the world. Discuss your itinerary with your doctor to find out whether you need to take preventive pills (you may not need them if you're staying only in air-conditioned city hotels, for example). If you do, discuss which ones are the most appropriate for you and the areas you'll be travelling through (in many countries malaria parasites are resistant to certain antimalarial drugs). If you're pregnant or travelling with young children you should avoid travelling in malarial areas if possible.

Drugs don't offer total protection, so you also need to reduce your risk of catching malaria (and other mosquito-borne diseases such as yellow fever and dengue fever) by trying to avoid being bitten in the first place.

- Malaria-carrying mosquitoes tend to bite between dusk and dawn, so in the evening wear clothing that covers your arms and legs.
- Avoid wearing dark-coloured clothes, perfumes and after-shave, as they attract mozzies and other insects.
- At all times use an insect repellent containing up to 20% DEET (N'N-diethyl-m-toluamide), such as Rid or Aerogard. Use them sparingly on children's skin, as too much can be harmful. It may be a good idea to put some repellent on your clothing, as mozzies can bite through some fabrics (but do a patch test on clothing first, as DEET may damage certain synthetics).
- If you're not staying in an air-conditioned hotel in a malarial area, use mosquito coils and a mosquito net.
- If you have a fever and are in or have been in a malarial area, it's safest to presume you have malaria until a blood test proves otherwise. See a doctor straightaway, as malaria can be fatal within a few days if it's not treated. (Also see a doctor if you have any feverish illness within 12 months of your return from a malarial country, and tell him or her where you've been.)

WHERE TO GET ADVICE

- **Specialist travel medical centres**

Many travellers planning to visit a third-world country opt to consult a doctor at a specialist travel medical centre, as staff in these clinics have up-to-date information and expertise on preventive medications and appropriate vaccinations. They're a quick and convenient 'one-stop shop' for getting your vaccinations (including yellow fever, if you need it — your GP probably won't be authorised to give this jab).

Fresh fruit juices and pieces of fruit may look tempting — but in developing countries it's wise to stick to bottled or canned drink, and fruit you can peel and cut yourself.

They also sell a range of equipment you may need, such as mosquito nets and first-aid kits. A Medicare rebate is payable on their doctors' consultation fee.

There are a number of these specialist centres — some of the major ones are listed here.

Travellers' Medical and Vaccination Centres

ACT: 2 Mort Street, Canberra.
Phone: (06) 257 7156.

NSW: 428 George Street, Sydney.
Phone: (02) 221 7133.

5/48 Macquarie Street, Parramatta.
Phone: (02) 891 4850.

51 Kembla Street, Wollongong.
Phone: (042) 29 7499

NT: 4 Westralia Street, Darwin.
Phone: (089) 81 2907.

Queensland: 247 Adelaide St, Brisbane.
Phone: (07) 3221 9066.

2 Nerang Street, Southport.
Phone: (07) 5526 4444.

SA: 29 Gilbert Place, Adelaide.
Phone: (08) 212 7522.

Victoria: 393 Little Bourke St, Melbourne.
Phone: (03) 9602 5788.

WA: 1 Mill Street, Perth.
Phone: (09) 321 1977.

Tasmania: 270 Sandy Bay Road, Hobart.
Phone: (002) 23 7577.

Qantas Travel Medicine Centre
70 Hunter Street, Sydney.
Phone: (02) 951 4422.

Fairfield Hospital
Yarra Bend Road, Fairfield, Melbourne.
Phone: (03) 9280 2230.

- **Your GP**

If your destination is considered relatively safe healthwise (Europe, the US, Canada, Japan or New Zealand, for example), a visit to your GP is all you need. He or she can also check what vaccinations are recommended for particular developing countries and order them for you through a pharmacy. However, the mark-up on these (and other) medications varies hugely from pharmacy to pharmacy and you may well pay considerably more than at a travellers' health centre.

- **MASTA**

To obtain cheaper vaccines and anti-malarial drugs through your GP, you can ask your doctor to order them for you through MASTA (Medical Advisory Service for Travellers Abroad) — he or she will then get them at wholesale prices and hopefully pass on that saving to you. That can save you a lot of money.

For example, one traveller complained to MASTA that a pharmacist in his area charged him $180 for an ampoule of rabies vaccine (according to the NSW branch of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, the maximum recommended price for this very expensive and seldom required protective shot is currently $236). His GP subsequently ordered the shots for his family through MASTA — at $70 each.

MASTA also provides a phone, letter and fax advisory service. For $10 (or $15 for a faxed reply) you can get a written personalised health brief for your trip. As well as detailed information on appropriate vaccinations and general medical advice, MASTA's database (updated twice a week) includes

Fruit that can't be peeled can carry many diseases in developing countries — avoid it.

news on any trouble spots in the countries you're visiting and emergency telephone numbers.

You could ask your GP if he or she subscribes to MASTA — if they do, they can contact MASTA on your behalf and you will receive the information free of charge. (Even if they don't subscribe, they can still order wholesale vaccines and anti-malarials for you through MASTA.)

For information about MASTA, phone (02) 9971 0239 or 1800 269 917 (toll-free), fax (02) 9971 1499 or write to PO Box 168, Dee Why 2099.

■ **International Travel Health Info Line**
Another source of information about protection you may need for specific areas is the International Travel Health Info Line, operated by the Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health — phone (06) 269 7815. You'll need a tone-dial, pushbutton phone to access any of the prerecorded messages. It's advisable, however, to supplement this information with a visit to a doctor so your individual risks can be assessed.

INSURANCE

Medical costs overseas can be very high, making it essential to have cover for medical expenses, even if you're fit and healthy.

■ Make sure you have sufficient travel insurance to cover medical and hospital costs while you're overseas, as well as loss of luggage and money, cancellation, additional expenses you may have to pay if forced to alter your travel plans due to illness or injury, and personal legal liability in case of accidents.

■ Choose a policy that suits your needs, not the first policy offered by your travel consultant. Check the conditions — most packages exclude any claims relating to pregnancy, alcohol or drug-related illnesses, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, while some won't cover you for pre-existing conditions either. If you intend participating in a sport considered hazardous, such as mountaineering, skiing or scuba diving, you'll also need to shop around for a tailored policy.

Note too that if you've hired a motorbike overseas and are involved in an accident, your insurer may not pay for your medical expenses unless you have a current Australian motorcycle licence. It pays to check.

■ Check whether your policy covers ambulance costs and an emergency flight home.

■ If you have private health insurance, check whether it gives any overseas coverage.

MEDICARE OVERSEAS

Medicare doesn't pay benefits for medical and hospital expenses you incur overseas. However, Finland, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden and the UK have reciprocal health care agreements with Medicare. In those countries you shouldn't incur large medical expenses for emergency care as you'll be covered by their national schemes for medical and public hospital treatment similar to Medicare.

Prearranged non-emergency treatment is not covered, nor is private hospital treatment or travel home to Australia.

To be eligible for medical assistance under the reciprocal scheme, you'll need to show your passport and a valid Medicare card. For further information, call Medicare on 13 2011 (for the cost of a local call, anywhere in Australia).

BEATING BALI BELLY

Don't rely solely on getting the right jabs to protect you against disease. Vaccines don't offer 100% protection. Watching what you eat and drink in developing countries and being scrupulous with your personal hygiene not only helps prevent serious diseases like cholera, typhoid and hepatitis A, but also minimises your chances of getting diarrhoea (also known by more exotic names like Bali belly, Delhi belly and Montezuma's revenge), which is by far the most common health problem among tourists.

IF TRAVELLING MAKES YOU SICK

You don't need to travel far for motion sickness to spoil your trip. Here are some tips you can try:

■ **In the air:** Sit in the area over the wings where the plane moves least. Tilt your seat back, close your eyes and keep your head still.

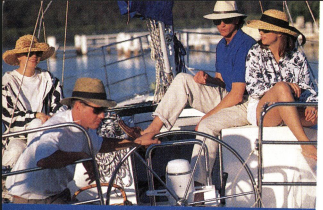
■ **At sea:** Midship inside or on a low deck outside is likely to be most stable. Focus on the horizon if you're on deck or lie down and close your eyes if you're inside.

■ **On a coach:** Avoid the back seats, which tend to sway a lot. Sit in the front and watch the road ahead.

■ **In the car:** Sit in front and concentrate on the road ahead rather than on anything inside the car (such as reading).

■ Many types of **travel sickness medication** are available, including a variety of tablets as well as patches, which are placed behind the ear. Remember to start using whichever you choose before you travel and bear in mind that many types cause drowsiness — that may be useful if you want to sleep but is hazardous if you're driving. They can also sometimes cause other problems, such as dizziness, a dry mouth and blurred vision. Discuss your options with your doctor.

■ If you want a **drug-free method**, you could try wrist bands which press on acupressure points on your wrist; they're usually available from pharmacies — some people find they work.



Sunscreen and sunhats are a must, particularly in tropical areas.

Even in luxury hotels you can't be assured of food safety, so always take these precautions if you're travelling in a country where you're doubtful about sanitation and hygiene standards. In a nutshell, "Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it!"

- Eat freshly and thoroughly cooked food served hot. Avoid food which has been kept warm or reheated. (Be careful with hotel buffets.)
- Avoid eating cold meat, salads, raw or cold seafood, including all shellfish.
- Avoid unpasteurised dairy products, including milk. In particular, don't buy ice cream (especially from street vendors).
- Only eat fruit you can peel yourself.
- Never drink tap water (or clean your teeth with it) unless it's boiled or purified first. You can sterilise water with iodine solution or tablets (preferable to chlorine tablets, which don't kill all organisms).
- Drink boiled, treated or bottled water (carbonated is safest, as it's less likely to be tampered with), bottled or canned soft drinks or beer or hot drinks such as tea or coffee.
- Don't have ice in your drinks.
- And, whether you're at home or overseas, always wash your hands before eating and after using the toilet.

TREATING 'THE TROTS'

Travellers' diarrhoea usually lasts three to five days and doesn't need any treatment. The most important thing to do is to drink plenty of fluids — at least three litres a day. (If you feel like eating, avoid coarse fruit and vegetables, dairy products and spicy, fatty foods. Bland foods like salted crackers, clear soup, boiled rice and bananas are best while you're recovering.)

Promptly replacing lost fluid is particularly important for children, who can dehydrate and become seriously ill very quickly. It's a good idea to pack oral rehydration solution sachets in your medical kit. Available from pharmacies in powder and tablet form (you add safe water), rehydration solutions (such as Gastrolyte) contain sugars, salts and minerals.

You can make your own by adding four teaspoons of sugar or honey plus half a teaspoon of salt to a litre of safe water. Alternatively, mix one part of fruit juice, cola or lemonade with four parts of clean water. Soft drinks and juices have a very high sugar content and can actually add to dehydration problems unless they're diluted.

If you have to travel and won't be near a toilet, anti-diarrhoeal medications like Imodium may be useful. Available without prescription, they slow down intestinal movement, but they won't cure the condition and may have side-effects. Don't give them to children under 12. And don't take them if you have blood in your faeces, severe stomach cramps or a fever (a temperature above 38°C). See a doctor — you've probably got dysentery and require antibiotics.

LOOKING FOR A DOCTOR WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH?

If you're sick while overseas and have trouble finding a reliable doctor who speaks English, there are some tricks you can try:

- Phone your travel insurance hotline.
- Contact the closest Australian Embassy or High Commission (if there isn't one nearby, another major English-speaking embassy, such as the UK or US, may be able to help).
- Go to an upmarket hotel and see the resident doctor, who will usually speak English.
- Consult your IAMAT (International Association for Medical Assistance for Travellers) pocket directory — you'll get one free of charge if you join IAMAT before you leave home. Membership is free but a donation is requested. IAMAT supplies a list of recommended doctors worldwide (who agree to provide medical help for members for a set low fee). In Australia, IAMAT can be contacted at 575 Bourke Street, Melbourne 3000, phone: (03) 9958 3511.

BE STREETWISE!

Travel safely! Road accidents are the leading cause of death and injury among travellers and are far more common than exotic diseases. So keep your risk low — use seatbelts in cars and taxis, helmets on motorbikes and bicycles, be aware of local traffic rules if you're driving or walking — and use hired drivers and guides if possible. ❑

JET LAG

If you've had a long-distance flight you may feel exhausted and 'out of sync' for up to a week after your arrival. You're tired during the day but can't sleep at night. Your jet lag is due to disruptions to your body's natural rhythms for sleeping and eating as a result of being suddenly whisked by plane to a very different time zone.

Lack of sleep, the stress of travelling and excessive alcohol intake can all make jet lag worse. So can flying eastwards (because it requires your body clock to speed up, which is harder to adjust to than if it's slowed down, as happens when you fly west). However, there are several things you can do to minimise jet lag. Here are some suggestions:

- Plan to arrive in the afternoon or evening if possible, or try having an overnight stopover on long hauls.
- During your flight, avoid caffeine and alcohol, as they can both cause dehydration and disturb your sleep.
- Drink plenty of water, eat small meals, and walk around the aircraft regularly.
- When you arrive at your destination, immediately adopt the local time to provide your body with the cues for eating, socialising and sleeping which reset your body's rhythms.
- Try to stay awake until it's bedtime at your destination. Take a walk outdoors, as sunlight helps your body to reset its clock.
- If disrupted sleep is a big problem for you, it may be worthwhile taking a short-acting sedative for the first couple of nights after your arrival. Ask your doctor about the most appropriate choice — a short-acting one (such as temazepam) which doesn't leave you feeling 'hungover' is preferable. Try them before you leave home in case you have any unwanted side-effects.

500 L refrigerators

If you shop around, you can buy a good frost-free fridge as cheaply as a cyclic-defrost model, and never have to defrost your freezer again.

IF YOU'VE LOOKED AROUND THE supermarket lately you may have noticed food items seem to be getting bigger. Wine has always been available in four-litre casks but now you can buy fruit juice and ice cream in 5 L sizes, packaged water has reached the 10 L mark, soft drinks are now available in 3 L bottles and 1 kg tubs of margarine are common. It may be time to upgrade to a larger refrigerator.

That's why we looked at large fridges this time — 500 L is big enough for a large family, and the market for these bigger models is growing.

Large fridges like these have very versatile storage — you can fit large bottles, casks and oddly shaped foods fairly easily.

FROST-FREE vs CYCLIC DEFROST

Do you want a frost-free or cyclic-defrost model? If you loathe defrosting your freezer, a frost-free model is for you. With cyclic-defrost models you still have to do this every so often.

The downside is that frost-free models generally cost several hundred dollars more — although in this test we found one (the **SHARP SJ51GWH**) that was as cheap as some cyclic-defrost models.

Frost-free fridges usually have two temperature controls, one for the freezer and one for the fresh food compartment, rather than a single control for both. This prevents one compartment dictating the temperature in the other, which can result in one being too cold or warm when the other is set just right.

Both types of fridge work equally well. However, we test fridges with no build-up of ice in the freezers of the cyclic-defrost models. In practice, as ice builds up it uses valuable freezer space, and the freezer becomes less efficient, using more electricity. It will also make it difficult to retrieve that ice cream buried under the glacier at the rear of the freezer. The bottom line is: if you have a cyclic-defrost fridge, keep it well defrosted.

THE UPSIDE-DOWN FRIDGE

For decades refrigerators were made with the freezer at the top and the fresh food compartment below. More recently manufacturers have been producing some models with the configuration reversed, but this is the first CHOICE test to have more 'upside-down' models than the conventional type. This segment of the market is now steadily growing, and for some very good reasons.

The most obvious is that you don't have to bend over to reach food stored in the fresh food compartment, and this is the area most often used. Open the door and there are all the contents laid out at a convenient height and easy to see.

Bottom-mounted freezers can use drawers instead of shelves, which are a convenient way of reaching food at the back of what may be a tightly packed freezer. Drawers also ensure there's air space around the food, which is important for evenness and speed of freezing. Drawers in top-mounted freezers wouldn't be practical, as they'd be too high for most people to see inside.

WHICH FRIDGE IS BEST?

The simple answer is that they're all good. They all cooled down a load of food in the freezer to a safe temperature in an acceptable amount of time, and they can all operate effectively in high room temperatures (we tested at 43°C to simulate a very hot summer's day). Also, being large fridges, there's very little to choose between them for ease of use — plenty of room in all of them for large bottles and casks as well as fresh food.

So the main difference between them is how much electricity they use — a fridge is switched on all day, every day, so it's a fairly significant user of energy. Four of the models tested — the **HOOVER, SHARP, FISHER & PAYKEL** and **WESTINGHOUSE Aurora RB501M** — had five stars on their energy label.

Profiles

Models are profiled in rank order within the 'frost-free' and 'cyclic-defrost' groups. Prices shown are a good target to aim for when shopping around, based on nationwide checks in October 1995. Anything lower is a bargain.

■ All the models tested have four rollers, with the two at the front adjustable for levelling the fridge.

■ All the models tested except the **SHARP** can be bought with either left or right-opening doors. The **FISHER & PAYKEL** and the **HOOVER** are the only models whose door opening direction can be changed after purchase.

■ All the fridges were supplied with ice cube trays and an assortment of storage bins and containers of various sizes. Other accessories such as an ice scraper, water jug and egg racks were supplied with some models.

The maximum given in the labelling scheme is six, so they're pretty good.

When we checked their claimed energy use we came up with a four-star result for the FISHER & PAYKEL. The company says this is because we tested it with its optional butter conditioner installed, and without it the fridge achieves its labelled five-star rating. It also says it now has a new butter conditioner available which can be turned off.

Running costs for an energy-efficient fridge will be lower, so combined with a lower purchase price you can make significant savings. In addition, check the profiles for any special features you might want.

WHAT TO BUY

■ **Frost-free**

HOOVER D505UF	$1600
SHARP SJ51GWH	$1350
FISHER & PAYKEL N500B	$1700

The SHARP is the cheapest to buy, the HOOVER the most efficient to run.

If you're interested in the cheaper end of the market and can't find the SHARP for around $1350, you might decide to settle for a cyclic-defrost model. It's pretty much 'swings and roundabouts' with the two in this test: the KELVINATOR Impression Series C500C costs less to buy, while the WESTINGHOUSE Aurora RB501M uses less electricity and is therefore cheaper to run.

FROST-FREE

HOOVER D505UF

Target price: $1600

■ Fresh food compartment on top, freezer underneath.
■ Two large drawers in freezer.
■ Shelves adjustable in fresh food compartment, drawers removable in freezer.
■ Separate temperature controls for freezer and fresh food compartments.
■ Concealed condenser coil at rear makes for easier cleaning.
■ Door opening direction can be reversed after purchase, though it's recommended you have a serviceperson do this.
■ Two dairy compartments (not temperature-controlled).

SHARP SJ51GWH

Target price: $1350

■ Freezer on top.
■ Only available with doors hinged on the right-hand side.
■ Shelves adjustable in freezer, but only removable in fresh food compartment.
■ One shelf in fresh-food compartment can be full or half-depth or folded back, to give more versatile storage.
■ Separate temperature controls for freezer and fresh food compartments.
■ Concealed condenser coil at rear makes for easier cleaning.
■ Removable chiller compartment.
■ Removable ice cube maker with pivoting trays for easy emptying.

FISHER & PAYKEL N500B

Target price: $1700

■ Fresh food compartment on top, freezer underneath.
■ Two large drawers in freezer.
■ Shelves adjustable in fresh food compartment, drawers removable in freezer.
■ Concealed condenser coil at rear makes for easier cleaning.
■ Door opening direction can be reversed after purchase, though it's recommended you have a serviceperson do this.
■ Temperature-controlled butter conditioner.
■ Door handles may be too low for some people.

WESTINGHOUSE AURORA BJ504M (New version: BJ504CM)

Target price: $1650

- Fresh food compartment on top, freezer underneath.
- Two large drawers in freezer.
- Shelves adjustable in fresh food compartment, drawers removable in freezer.
- Separate temperature controls for freezer and fresh food compartments.
- Dairy compartment (not temperature-controlled).
- The model we tested didn't have a concealed condensor coil, but Email says the new version (which is otherwise the same) does.

KELVINATOR IMPRESSION SERIES N500C

Target price: $1650

- Freezer on top.
- Shelves adjustable in fresh food compartment, removable in freezer.
- Two half-shelves in fresh food compartment give more versatile storage.
- Separate temperature controls for freezer and fresh food compartments.
- Concealed condenser coil at rear.
- Removable chiller compartment with its own temperature control.
- Temperature-controlled dairy compartment.

CYCLIC DEFROST

WESTINGHOUSE AURORA RB501M (New version: RB501CM)

Target price: $1400

- Fresh food compartment on top, freezer underneath.
- Two large drawers in freezer.
- Shelves adjustable in fresh food compartment, drawers removable in freezer.
- Dairy compartment (not temperature-controlled).
- The model we tested didn't have a concealed condensor coil, but Email says the new version (which is otherwise the same) does.

KELVINATOR IMPRESSION SERIES C500C

Target price: $1250

- Freezer on top.
- Two half-shelves in fresh food compartment give more versatile storage.
- Concealed condenser coil at rear.
- Shelves adjustable in fresh food compartment, removable in freezer.
- Dairy compartment (not temperature-controlled).

What to look for

- First decide on the size of fridge that best suits your requirements. The 500 L size in this test is good for large families, but don't forget to measure the space you have available in the kitchen. The fridge needs air space around it — check the brochures in the shop for how big this needs to be. This is particularly important if it will be installed in a recess or between two cupboards.
- Do you want a cyclic-defrost or frost-free model? Although frost-free fridges are usually more expensive, they don't have to be defrosted.
- Would an 'upside-down' fridge be more convenient than the standard freezer-on-top type (see page 27)?
- If you're concerned about energy efficiency, check the energy label — the more stars the better.
- Will the door opening direction suit your kitchen layout? Can it be changed? Does this require a service call or can you do it yourself? This may sound unimportant now but if you're likely to move it's a useful feature.
- If the fridge has to be positioned with the door hinge next to a wall, shelves should be removable with the door open at only 90°.
- Check that the shelves are easy to remove and replace, and that the shelf positions suit your needs.
- Decide what features — such as butter conditioner, ice cube maker, storage compartments and chiller zones — are useful to you.
- The fridge should be on rollers to make it easy to move, and they should be adjustable for levelling the fridge. Check whether the rollers have brakes, which can help stability.
- Look for smooth, easy to clean surfaces with no dirt-trapping crevices.

500 L refrigerators

Brand/model (in rank order within types)	Manufacturer/ distributor	Origin	Target Price ($)*	1 Warranty (years)	Dimensions (H x W x D, mm)	2 Freezer location	3 Usable volume (fridge/ freezer, L)	4 Noise (dB)
FROST-FREE								
HOOVER D505UF	Hoover	Australia	1600	2+3	1720 x 790 x 665	Bottom	332 / 146	47
SHARP SJ51GWH	Sharp	Thailand	1350	1 *(B)* +4	1700 x 735 x 700	Top	323 / 142	45
FISHER & PAYKEL N500B	Fisher & Paykel	Australia	1700	1 *(B)* +4	1695 x 790 x 670	Bottom	337 / 113	38
WESTINGHOUSE Aurora BJ504M *(A)*	Email	Australia	1650	1 *(B)* +4	1690 x 790 x 680	Bottom	316 / 151	39
KELVINATOR Impression Series N500C	Email	Australia	1650	2+3	1680 x 790 x 725	Top	344 / 115	42
CYCLIC DEFROST								
WESTINGHOUSE Aurora RB501M *(A)*	Email	Australia	1400	1 *(B)* +4	1690 x 795 x 690	Bottom	321 / 147	37
KELVINATOR Impression Series C500C	Email	Australia	1250	2+3	1680 x 790 x 725	Top	346 / 134	38

* Prices shown are a good target to aim for, based on nationwide checks in October 1995.

(A) The Westinghouse models we tested don't have a concealed condensor coil at the back, but Email says new versions (that are otherwise the same) do. The new versions are the Westinghouse Aurora BJ504CM and the Westinghouse Aurora RB501CM.

(B) Extended to two years on registration.

(C) Email says it has improved this fridge since its energy label was approved. The claimed energy consumption is now 940 kWh/year.

(D) Using the butter conditioner makes the difference between the five stars claimed and the four we measured — see page 28 for more details.

Comparable models

■ The **WESTINGHOUSE Aurora BJ505M** is similar to the **BJ504M/BJ504CM** we tested, except the **BJ505M** has a chiller compartment.

■ The **ADMIRAL 2U505F** is technically similar to the **HOOVER D505UF** that we tested. They differ only in a few features.

New models on the market

Because this test report was unavoidably delayed, you may find some other 500 L fridges available that we weren't able to report on. When we checked in October we found only the **GE TBR17AN** 502 L and **GE TBG16JAX** 500 L frost-free models.

1 Warranty

The first number in the column refers to the warranty period on the fridge in general. The second number refers to the warranty period for the sealed refrigeration system and applies to parts only.

2 Freezer location

The freezer can be above or below the fresh-food compartment. See *The upside-down fridge* on page 27 for a discussion of the advantages of having the freezer at the bottom.

3 Usable volume

This is the internal volume of the fridge, excluding any nooks and crannies that really can't be called usable space, which is why the numbers may not add up to the exact volume claimed by the manufacturer.

4 Noise

Noise levels were measured in our lab quite close to the fridges. In your kitchen they may sound quieter, but comparatively the same ones will be loudest. All the models are in fact fairly quiet.

The environmental state of play

Until recently fridges contained chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in their cooling system (it was the refrigerant), and CFCs were also used as the gas for producing the foam insulation. CFCs contribute to the hole in the ozone layer and to the greenhouse effect (global warming). Their use has been banned in fridges manufactured in or imported into Australia since the end of 1994.

All the models in our test were CFC-free. Their use a refrigerant known as hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) 134a, which has no effect on the ozone layer and a reduced effect on global warming.

All except the **HOOVER** use pentane — which has no effect on the ozone layer and low global warming impact — in the production of the insulation foam. The **HOOVER** uses the hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) 141b, which has reduced ozone and greenhouse effects, for the insulation. HCFC 141b will be phased out in years to come.

What about old fridges?

What happens to the CFCs in older fridges when they are disposed of? In most cases the refrigerators are recycled by scrap metal merchants or simply end up as landfill. Some councils and recycling centres in Australia are reclaiming the refrigerant on a small scale.

If you want to be sure the refrigerant is reclaimed, check with the disposal site. If they don't do it, the only alternative is to arrange a service call, at your expense, to have the CFC removed.

The foam insulation also contains some CFCs, trapped in the foam cells. These are released into the atmosphere when the fridges are shredded for scrap metal. There is currently no process available in Australia for recovering these CFCs.

It has been estimated that there are approximately nine million fridges in Australia at the moment that still contain CFCs, of which approximately half a million are scrapped each year, releasing around 400 tonnes of CFCs into the environment.

In Germany and Holland local councils are required to recover all CFCs in the refrigerant and foam prior to disposal. The councils have to pay the recycler approximately $30 for each fridge disposed of. There are now factories in the US undertaking this type of work as well.

5 ergy use imed/measured, h/year)	6 Running costs ($/year)	7 Energy rating (claimed/measured)	8 Ease of use score (%)	9 Energy efficiency score (%)	10 Overall score (%)	Brand/model (in rank order within types)
60 / 780	78	★★★★★ / ☆☆☆☆☆	73	71	72	**HOOVER** D505UF
40 / 840	84	★★★★★ / ☆☆☆☆☆	74	69	70	**SHARP** SJ51GWH
50 / 940	94	★★★★★ / ☆☆☆☆☆ *(D)*	75	64	67	**FISHER & PAYKEL** N500B
30 / 1040	104	★★★★ / ☆☆☆☆	71	59	63	**WESTINGHOUSE** Aurora BJ504M *(A)*
70 / 1050	105	★★★★ / ☆☆☆☆	71	55	60	**KELVINATOR** Impression Series N500C
80 / 810	81	★★★★★ / ☆☆☆☆☆	71	70	70	**WESTINGHOUSE** Aurora RB501M *(A)*
80 / 870 *(C)*	87	★★★★ / ☆☆☆☆☆	68	64	65	**KELVINATOR** Impression Series C500C

5 Energy use per year
This is a measure of how much energy the fridge uses in a year to maintain a temperature of 3°C in the fresh food compartment and –15°C in the freezer, when operated at a room temperature of 32°C.

6 Running costs per year
The running cost is calculated from the energy used per year, using a price of 10 cents per kilowatt hour.

7 Energy efficiency ratings
The star ratings for energy efficiency are based on the energy used per litre of fridge space in a day. Six stars are the best possible score under the star rating scheme. The black stars are the manufacturer's claims, the open stars are what we measured.

8 Ease of use score
Five factors were included in the ease of use score: ease of cleaning, ease of storing items of various shapes and sizes, adjustability of the shelves, ease of use of the controls, and ease of moving the fridge.

9 Energy efficiency score
As discussed in *Which fridge is best?* on page 27, all the fridges performed acceptably at cooling food down and operating in high room temperatures. They therefore all score the equivalent of a 'pass' for these aspects, leaving only energy efficiency as a comparative performance factor between the models.

10 Overall score
The scores were weighted as follows to give the overall score:
- Energy efficiency: 70%
- Ease of use: 30%

Reliability

We surveyed a sample of our subscribers about the reliability of their fridges, asking whether theirs had needed repair in the previous 12 months.

The results are given on the right for brands for which we had more than 50 responses; the number in brackets is the number of fridges of a particular brand reported on by subscribers in the survey. On average, only about 10% of the fridges had needed repair during the previous 12 months — making them generally a very reliable appliance — at an average cost of around $132.

Note that the results of the survey are for fridges of all brands and models, not just for those included in this test.

	% not needing repair
Ignis (79)	95
Admiral (108)	94
Hoover (175)	94
Fisher & Paykel (384)	93
Frigidaire (216)	93
Gorenje Pacific (67)	91
Sharp (54)	91
Kelvinator (1257)	90
Philips (470)	90
Westinghouse (1501)	89
Malleys/Whirlpool (145)	87
General Electric (275)	86
Rank Arena (68)	86

We also asked our survey respondents whether they would buy the same brand of fridge again.

	% who would buy again
Fisher & Paykel (384)	94
Kelvinator (1257)	92
Westinghouse (1501)	92
Sharp (54)	91
Frigidaire (216)	89
Hoover (175)	89
Malleys/Whirlpool (145)	86
Admiral (108)	85
General Electric (275)	85
Philips (470)	79
Ignis (79)	78
Gorenje Pacific (67)	73
Rank Arena (68)	57

Overbooking ordeals

It's every traveller's fear — turning up to an airport to catch a flight, only to be told there's no room on the plane. What can you do about it?

ALL AIRLINES OVERBOOK THEIR flights, leaving passengers stranded on occasion. At best, it can be inconvenient — at worst it's a disaster. But because air tickets are really just 'standby' tickets, your rights of redress are limited.

WHY DO THEY OVERBOOK?

In their defence, airlines say that running an airline is an expensive business, and their aim is to fill as many seats on flights as possible. One problem with making sure flights are full is that, for all sorts of reasons, people miss their flights. In airline-speak, this is called a 'no-show'.

Based on past experience, airlines try to predict how many no-shows are likely on a particular flight, and overbook flights based on the expected number — but of course this is never predictable with certainty. There is no government or industry limit on overbooking.

Incidentally, because the airlines recognise many no-shows aren't the fault of passengers (getting stuck in traffic, for example), they don't 'punish' people who miss their flight. They simply give them a seat on another one — which can roll the overbooking problem still further along the line.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A FLIGHT IS OVERBOOKED?

Most airlines won't 'bump' passengers off the plane if they're flying first or business class, or are premium frequent flyers. If you're an economy class passenger on an overbooked plane and you're unlucky enough to be one of the 'overs', you'll be put on standby.

On domestic flights in Australia, the airlines will try to put you on the first alternative flight to your destination — but they won't provide compensation. On international flights, what happens depends partly on the airline. At the very least, they will usually provide some sort of compensation, which varies depending on where the flight is going, and the length of the delay.

HOW CAN I STOP IT HAPPENING TO ME?

There are some precautions you can take to avoid getting caught. They won't guarantee you a seat (as the sorry story of Lurline Caffery shows — see *Hell in Heathrow*, left), but they'll certainly give you a flying start.

- **Ask your travel agent to have a seat allocated to you** — it will increase your chances of getting on the flight. Most airlines will give you a seat number in advance.
- **Book your flight early,** especially if you're flying in peak season. The earlier you book, the more likely it is the airline will give you a seat number in advance.
- **Get to the airport early.** This is the most important thing you can do. If you have a seat number and check in at the airport with plenty of time to spare, you stand a much better chance of getting a seat if the flight is overbooked.
- **Allow plenty of time for connecting flights.** Travel agents generally allow you the minimum connection time between flights (around two hours), but given all the things that can go wrong, it's wise to ask for more time than this.
- **If you have a good reason to be on the flight, say so.** State your claim clearly and persistently — let the airline know the inconvenience they have created.
- **Re-confirm your flight** if your airline asks you to do so.

HELL IN HEATHROW

Earlier this year, after visiting relatives in London, Lurline Caffery turned up at Heathrow airport to catch her British Airways flight to Sydney.

She had spent nearly $3000 on a full-price ticket, and had confirmed her flight a few days prior to departure (in fact, she had received written confirmation). She has a disability, and had sought and received a specific seat number. She also arrived at the airport well before check-in time.

At check-in, Ms Caffery was told the flight had been overbooked, and she was put on standby. After two nerve-wracking hours waiting — and arguing with British Airways staff — Ms Caffery finally managed to get on the flight, which meant someone else was not so lucky.

Ms Caffery asks: "I wonder how many other sectors or industries could get away with selling a product, taking money in advance, giving written confirmation of delivery and then totally failing to deliver the product which has been bought and paid for?"

It's a fair question. But unfortunately in Australia, and elsewhere in the world, airlines are getting away with it.

IN A NUTSHELL

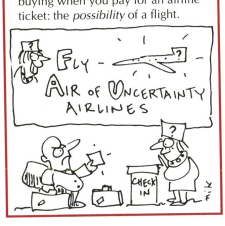
■ Legally your ticket is only considered an offer made by the airline, which you accept when you check in at the airport. If you look at the conditions on your ticket, you'll see there's no guarantee you'll be given a seat, even though your ticket says something like "Reservations, bookings, status OK". The Trade Practices Commission considers this acceptable; most passengers don't.

■ In Europe and the US, airlines are bound by government regulation to provide passengers with certain travel options and monetary compensation if they can't get on a flight because it's overbooked. However, this isn't the case in Australia, and the government hasn't taken any action to force airlines to give passengers a better deal.

OUR VERDICT

■ CHOICE would like to see restrictions on the percentage of overbookings per flight that can be made by the airlines, and the same provision of travel options and financial compensation that applies in many other countries.

■ The fact that the airlines can overbook and bump you off the plane should be stated more clearly up-front, preferably at the time you buy your ticket, so at least there's no doubt about what you're actually buying when you pay for an airline ticket: the *possibility* of a flight.



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For new subscriptions and renewals received October 1 to December 31, 1995.

Our 18th draw will be held on January 15, 1996. Two lucky winners will win prizes from tests published in CHOICE, April 1995.

1st Prize: **Dishwasher valued at up to $1700.**

2nd Prize: **51cm colour television valued at up to $800.**

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A subscription to *Travel* costs just $27 a year — you can use the form on this page to subscribe. The latest issue features:

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Kitchen whizzes

A versatile handheld blender will cost you $70 to $100 (or more), but if you just want to make soups, milkshakes or baby food you can find decent models for as little as $30.

Handheld blenders: good for small kitchens where you can't afford the space for a benchtop model.

UNTIL A FEW YEARS AGO 'blender' meant a beast on your benchtop. Now handheld blenders are just as common: their small size makes use and storage easy, and they have the added convenience of being able to blend foods in any small container or in the cooking pot itself, which saves washing up.

Both types can beat, mix, purée and aerate. But while handheld models are fast and easy to use and clean, benchtop blenders are still a better choice for dealing with a larger range and quantity of food.

Handhelds are becoming more versatile, with extra blades and attachments for different tasks and mills for grinding and chopping. However, if you want to chop ice you'll generally still need a benchtop blender, and beating egg whites to a stiff peak or making a sponge cake need a mixer.

WHICH ARE THE BEST?

We tested 11 handheld blenders, all in the $25 to $100 bracket except the **BAMIX L133** — at $199 this model is one for the well-heeled. (Also see *Bamix changes* on page 39 for more information on Bamix and the L133.)

After weeks of blending, chopping, whipping and grinding, the best and most versatile performers were clearly the three blenders with mills (chopping attachments for hard foods): the **BRAUN MR350CA**, the very similar **BRAUN MR300CA**, and the **BAMIX L133**. The **BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60** headed the list of blenders without a mill. All of these except the **BAMIX** cost between $70 and $100. They're all easy to use and clean.

Mixing and blending soft foods is something all blenders should do well, and we found few differences between them as we frothed banana smoothies in a jiffy and made a good mayonnaise very easily and quickly. Most models also handled blending pumpkin soup very well, although some produced a coarser texture or required more up-and-down effort, which is reflected in their performance scores (see the tables on page 37 and 39).

Where the differences really began to show up was in coping with harder foods, such as chopping raw vegetables — only the top four in the table handled it well.

The models with a mill clearly have the edge in versatility, as they can grind parmesan cheese, nuts and the like, though only the **BAMIX** can grind coffee beans.

If you just want to use a blender for things like soft foods, milkshakes and soups, you'd probably be happy with the cheaper ($30 to $50) **KENWOOD, LINDA, RONSON** or **BLACK & DECKER Slender Blender**.

HOW LONG WILL THEY LAST?

Stories of small kitchen appliances burning out are commonplace, so we put the blenders through a test to check how likely this was. Each machine was run for a total of 350 on/off cycles over three days to simulate use over an extended period. Each cycle was a leisurely one minute of operation in water at maximum speed, with a three-minute cool-down period.

Only the **TIFFANY SM-305** was affected; it began to smoke after nearly 300 cycles, at which point we ended the test. As this wasn't a particularly severe test, we downgraded this model to 'not recommended'.

The **BAMIX** comes with a five-year warranty, which is good for a small appliance.

WHAT TO BUY

■ Handheld blenders with a mill

BRAUN Multiquick 350 Combi MR350CA $99

equal **BAMIX** L133 $199

BRAUN Multiquick 300 Combi MR300CA $79

■ If you don't need a mill but still want reasonable versatility (eg chopping vegetables and whipping cream):

BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60 $70

■ If you just want to make soups, milkshakes, baby food and similar:

KENWOOD A178 $50

equal **LINDA** Stick Mixer MS13 $30

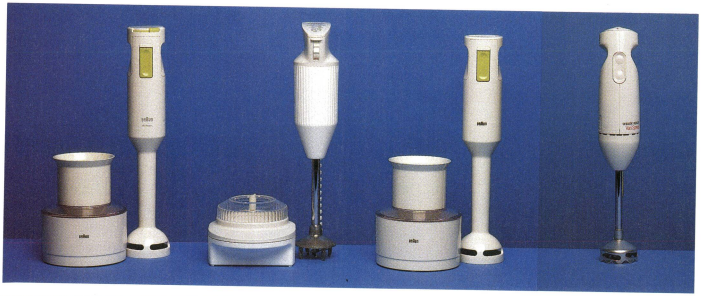
RONSON Maxi Mix 8342 $50

BLACK & DECKER Slender Blender SB30 $35

The **MOULINEX Turbomix Plus** was especially good at whipping cream, but that would need to be very important to you before it warranted this model's $80 price tag (see *What are they good at?* for other models that whipped cream well).

Profiles

The four top models are listed in rank order within types. Prices shown are based on nationwide checks in September 1995. Anything lower is a bargain.



HANDHELD BLENDERS WITH MILL

BRAUN MULTIQUICK 350 COMBI MR350CA

Price: $99

The **MR350CA** is technically similar to the cheaper **MR300CA** but has two lower speeds to suit the whisk attachment. It comes with a 500 mL mixing and measuring beaker with a lid. It's also available with a smaller specialised herb and spice mill (model **MR350HC**).

BAMIX L133

Price: $199

The **L133** has two speeds, blades for chopping, mixing and whisking, a dry mill and a hefty price tag (but it does have a five-year warranty). The new distributor of this brand claims four blades and a beaker are now standard with new stock. Other models are also available including the more expensive **C133** model, which has a mill suitable for wet as well as dry ingredients.

BRAUN MULTIQUICK 300 COMBI MR300CA

Price: $79

The **MR300CA** has a fixed blade (no attachments), one speed only and is supplied with a 500 mL mixing and measuring beaker with a lid. We tested the **MR300** blender plus **CA1** mill as the **Combi** package, but they're also sold separately for around $49 and $30 respectively.

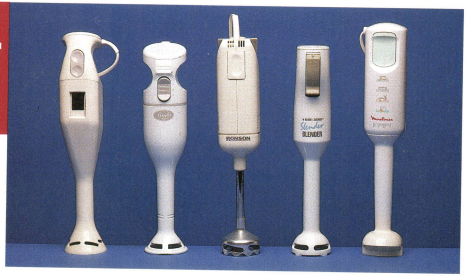
WITHOUT MILL

BLACK & DECKER VARI SPEED SB60

Price: $70

This variable-speed model comes with three blades, a 500 mL plastic measuring beaker and a 750 mL stainless steel one to keep milkshakes or whipped cream extra-cold.

If you just want to make food like milkshakes, soup and mayonnaise and aren't planning to chop hard foods with your handheld blender, you could buy the cheaper KENWOOD, LINDA, RONSON or BLACK & DECKER Slender Blender SB30 (left to right). You'd only need the more expensive MOULINEX (far right) if whipping cream is especially important to you.



What are they good at?

Brand/model (in rank order)	Sauces	Purées*	Smoothies	Soup	Mayonnaise	Whipping cream	Chopping vegetables	Chopping peanuts	Grating hard cheese	Grinding coffee
BLENDERS WITH MILL										
BRAUN Combi MR350CA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	na
BAMIX L133	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
BRAUN Combi MR300CA	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	na
BLENDERS WITHOUT MILL										
B&D Vari Speed	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	na	na	na
KENWOOD A178	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			na	na	na
LINDA Stick Mixer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			na	na	na
RONSON Maxi Mix	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		na	na	na
MOULINEX Turbomix Plus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		na	na	na
B&D Slender Blender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			na	na	na
TIFFANY Magic Mixer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			na	na	na

* For example, puréeing cooked vegetables for baby food.
na Not applicable — the blender/mill isn't suitable for this task.

Chopping raw vegetables is not something all blenders do equally well, as these pictures show. The BRAUN (right) chopped carrot pieces evenly but the MOULINEX was clearly unsuitable for this job.

A ✓ in a column means the blender was good or very good at the task — that is, it scored more than 67%. For harder foods you need a blender with a mill or at least the **Black & Decker Vari Speed SB60**.

■ **Blending** was assessed by whipping up a smoothie made with milk, ice cream and half a banana, making a standard whole-egg mayonnaise, and getting the lumps out of pumpkin soup. Smoothness of the result was what counted. Blenders with an open guard design (like the **BAMIX**) can easily be moved sideways to chase lumps (such as in the soup) and are better than the others to use in an open saucepan, especially if the liquid level is low.

■ **Whipping**: Handheld blenders generally aren't the appliance of choice for whipping cream, which needs a slower blade speed to add air without risking a buttery result. We used any special blades or whisks supplied, and looked for a smooth result with a decent volume increase. Best was the **MOULINEX** with its double whisks, but the other special whisking tools were good, too. The blenders without attachments gave a usable, but far from perfect, result.

■ **Chopping** was assessed with raw carrot and raw cabbage. The better models produced an evenly chopped result suitable for coleslaw. The poorer models left large lumps or the blade clogged badly, even when water was added to circulate the food. Some blenders simply weren't suited to this task, as the table shows.

■ **Grinding** ability of the mills was tested with parmesan cheese and peanuts. We looked for fineness of grind in all cases. The **BAMIX** mill ground parmesan cheese more finely than the others, and was the only one that could grind coffee beans — it gave a fine enough grind for making espresso coffee. The two **BRAUNs**' mills were larger and more versatile for wet foods and easily produced foods like nuts for topping ice cream.

What to look for

■ There's a wide range of accessories for whipping cream but all gave good results: from left, the **BAMIX** beater (the **BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60** has a similar one); the **BRAUN** clip-on whisk (the **RONSON** also has one); and the **MOULINEX** handmixer-style whisking head.

■ Grip size and controls also vary: left, the chunky **RONSON** with speed control; right, the slim single-speed **BRAUN MR300CA**. It's a good idea to hold the blender in the shop to make sure it suits your hand size.

■ The reason why some are born to chop: from left, the open **BAMIX** guard allows good contact with the food when stabbing downwards, whereas the **MOULINEX's** shape prevents this. The **BRAUNs** (right) have a food processor-type blade in their mill.

Handheld blenders

Brand/model (in rank order within types)	Manufacturer/ distributor	Origin	Target price ($)*	Warra (years)
With mill				
BRAUN Multiquick 350 Combi MR350CA	Tycraft	Spain	99	1 *(B)*
BAMIX L133 *(A)*	Homewarehouse	Switzerland	199	5 *(B)*
BRAUN Multiquick 300 Combi MR300CA	Tycraft	Spain	79	1 *(B)*
Without mill				
BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60	Black & Decker	China	70	1
KENWOOD Hand blender/mixer A178	Breville	China	50	1
LINDA Stick Mixer MS13	Linda	China	30	1 *(B)*
RONSON Maxi Mix 8342	Ronson Australia	China	50	1
MOULINEX Turbomix Plus R35	Mobex	France	80	1
BLACK & DECKER Slender Blender SB30	Black & Decker	China	35	1
Not recommended — poor durability				
TIFFANY Magic Mixer SM-305	GAF Control (Sales)	China	25	1 *(B)*

* Prices shown are a good target to aim for, based on nationwide checks in September 1995.

(A) The Bamix is only available from its new distributor, Homewarehouse (check in the phone book for an outlet near you).

(B) These models don't have full replacement warranties; the Bamix's and Tiffany's are repair only, the rest a repair *or* replacement warranty.

(C) Has a clip-on whisk attachment. With the Moulinex you attach the whisk head instead of the blender foot.

Why we picked these models

For this test we chose the biggest-selling models, plus any others that were found in a survey of the larger chain stores. This means these models should be easy to find around Australia, but may mean we've excluded some brands that aren't as widely available.

■ **SUNBEAM:** We tested the **SUNBEAM Maestro JM035** and found it performed well — on a par with the **BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60**. Unfortunately it's been discontinued since testing, and replaced by the **SUNBEAM JM050**. This model has three blades (for chopping, mixing and whisking) instead of the **JM035's** one. If you'd like a **SUNBEAM** blender, look out for the **JM050**, which will cost around $130.

For people with disabilities

An occupational therapist from the Independent Living Centre examined all the blenders and identified the following as features to look for when buying:

- Light weight.
- Easy-to-use switches.
- Easy removal and replacement of blades and accessories.
- Little or no suction of the blades onto the bottom of a mixing beaker.
- A coiled power cord for safety.
- For people who are visually impaired but have full use of their hands, blenders with a fixed blade are best, since there's no need to assemble them.
- Low suction is important for one-handed users.

Recommendations

None of the handheld blenders was judged ideal for users with disabilities, but the following were the best:

■ **BAMIX L133**: coiled cord is good, but it may be a little heavy.

■ **BRAUN MR300CA** and **MR350CA**: light, slim and easy to attach the mill (both) and whisk (**MR350CA**), but suction could be a problem.

■ **MOULINEX Turbomix Plus R35**: light switch, attachments easy to use, but whisks need two hands to remove; no real suction problems.

eeds	2 Blades	3 Noise (dB)	4 Performance score (%)	5 Ease of use score (%)	6 Ease of cleaning score (%)	7 Overall score (%)	Brand/model (in rank order within types)	
	1 *(C)*	64	83	85	90	85	**BRAUN** Multiquick 350 Combi MR350CA	
	3	62	83	90	80	84	**BAMIX** L133 *(A)*	equal
	1	65	80	85	90	84	**BRAUN** Multiquick 300 Combi MR300CA	
riable + pulse	3	73	80	85	90	84	**BLACK & DECKER** Vari Speed SB60	
	1	78	69	80	80	75	**KENWOOD** Hand blender/mixer A178	
	1	65	62	85	90	75	**LINDA** Stick Mixer MS13	equal
	3 *(C)*	75	65	80	90	75	**RONSON** Maxi Mix 8342	
	1 *(C)*	73	62	85	80	72	**MOULINEX** Turbomix Plus R35	
	1	68	60	85	80	71	**BLACK & DECKER** Slender Blender SB30	
	1	70	63	80	80	71	**TIFFANY** Magic Mixer SM-305	

1 Speeds
Lower speeds can give more control and are needed to suit attachments such as the **BRAUN MR350CA's** clip-on whisk. The **BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60** has a pulse button that gives maximum speed regardless of the position of its variable-speed control.

2 Blades
The simpler blenders have a fixed all-purpose blade; others (generally the more expensive machines) have up to three blades for chopping, mixing and beating.

3 Noise
We measured noise at the ear level of a user half a metre away. The **KENWOOD** and **RONSON** were the loudest, and along with the **BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60** were quite annoying. The **RONSON** and **BLACK & DECKER Vari Speed SB60** blades and the **RONSON** and **BRAUN MR350CA** clip-on whisks all rattled a little.

4 Performance score
The blenders were rated for their food-handling performance, including how fast they did the job. Scores for blending, whipping, chopping and grinding were averaged to give the final performance score. See *What are they good at?* on page 37 for details.

The **TIFFANY** is 'not recommended' because it did poorly in an endurance test — see *How long will they last?* on page 35.

5 Ease of use score
This assessment covered ease of assembly, blade changing, and general comfort of grip and controls. Models scored poorly if they had problems with suction of the blades onto the bottom of the mixing container (**KENWOOD** and **RONSON**), too large a grip (**RONSON**), or needed excessive finger strength to operate (**TIFFANY**).

6 Ease of cleaning score
All the handheld blenders can easily be cleaned by rinsing them under the tap or operating them for a few seconds in water with a little detergent solution. The **BLACK & DECKER Slender Blender SB30**, **KENWOOD**, **MOULINEX** and **TIFFANY** may need a little more attention due to the shape of the underside of their blade guard.

7 Overall score
We combined the scores from each of the tests to calculate the overall score. They were weighted as follows:
- Performance: 50%
- Ease of use: 25%
- Ease of cleaning: 25%

Safety

Handheld blenders aren't quite as safe as benchtop models as there's no enclosing jug to protect fingers from moving parts. A full guard around the blade comes closest; the **BLACK & DECKERs**, **BRAUNs**, **LINDA**, **KENWOOD**, **MOULINEX**, **RONSON** and **TIFFANY** have this. The **BAMIX** has an open guard design with four metal vanes around the blade. This may help with blending performance (see page 37 for details) but it will need more care when handling.

A bit of care is also needed when blending hot foods, as splashing can lead to burns as well as a mess to clean up — if you're blending in the pot, take it off the heat first.

A handheld electrical appliance and water sound like a potentially unsafe combination, but we found no electrical problems with any of the blenders. It's a good idea, though, to make sure the power is off before changing the blades or wiping over the shaft and guard area.

Bamix changes

The distributor of Bamix in Australia went into liquidation late last year, with around 16,000 customers having paid money for goods they had ordered (including both Bamix and non-Bamix products) but never received.

In June the new distributor of Bamix — Homewarehouse — advertised discounts on new Bamix products for people who had already paid for one and not received it. So far only about 600 eligible former customers have taken up this offer.

If you've been affected by the former Bamix distributor's collapse and are still interested in a Bamix product, contact Homewarehouse on 1800 678 938 for further details.

Washing machines: going hot and cold

You can buy a good washing machine for well under $1000 — and washing in cold water helps keep your running costs down.

WARM WATER GIVES A BETTER clean but cold water is cheaper — right?

Not necessarily. The standard of washing machines and detergents today is so high they can remove almost the same amount of dirt from clothes in a cold wash as they do in warm water.

In the machines we tested, dirt removal in a cold wash was, on average, only about 5% less than for a warm wash. So if you want to save money, help the environment and still get a clean wash — cold water is good value. If you still prefer warm water, ask your local electricity authority about off-peak water heating to save money, or consider changing to a gas or solar hot water system.

We tested washing machines costing up to $1200. More expensive models — especially imported front loaders — are available, but we think most people would be satisfied with the performance of the best machines in this test.

RUNNING COSTS

Buying a washing machine is not cheap. Neither is its upkeep. But if you think it's your water and electricity bills that are costing the most, guess again — if you wash in cold water, detergent makes up about three quarters of your entire bill.

Buying cheaper detergents that still get your clothes clean will help — see our latest test of laundry detergents in the August 1995 issue to find out which ones to try. But also consider how much detergent you use per wash. Clothing that just needs a light clean, such as pyjamas, probably won't need as much detergent as a load of football jumpers. It may be worth experimenting with how much detergent you need to use.

To work out overall running expenses for the machines tested, we calculated how much detergent (based on the Australian Standard), energy and water they used per 1000 kg of washing, assuming detergent costs $3.50/kg, energy costs 10 cents/kWh, and water costs 65 cents/kL. (1000kg is about four 5 kg loads a week for a year.)

On this basis, we found the **BENDIX WMN 652** front loader was the cheapest to run. The **GE WWA 6604/8894** top loader 'clones' were the most expensive.

The dollar amounts we calculated won't be exactly what you'd pay because your usage pattern will probably be different, but the comparison will still be valid — the cheaper machines will still be cheaper.

FRONT OR TOP LOADER?

There's little difference between the front and top loaders we tested when it comes to dirt removal, but front-loading machines stand out in other respects: they are more water-efficient, their spin cycle generally extracts more water and they are gentler on clothes. On the other hand, most top loaders are faster.

WHAT TO BUY

The factors on which we rate washing machines are dirt removal, spin, water and energy efficiency, and gentleness. While the machines' performance for each of these varied widely, the overall scores when these five scores were combined were too close together to be a useful basis for choosing a *What to buy* list.

A machine therefore had to reach a minimum score in each category (based on reasonable performance expectations) to be included in our *What to buy* list.

For example, for 5 kg machines, a 2% lower score for water efficiency means using about 5 L more per cycle. That's why **HOOVER** and **FISHER & PAYKEL** machines missed out on being in our top loader *What to buy* list — compared with the machines in it they use significantly more water. On the other hand, **FISHER & PAYKEL**s are very reliable.

FRONT LOADERS

THOR TH 85 (4.5 kg) $1000

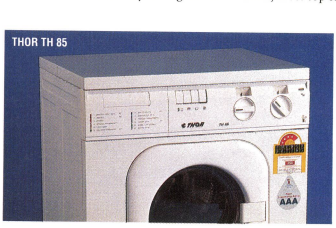
GE WWA 6504/7504/8504 (5 kg) ..... $920/$1060/$1160

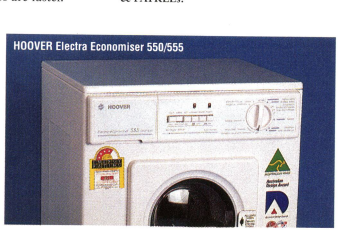
WHIRLPOOL AWG 384 (4.5 kg) $1040

HOOVER Electra Economiser 550/555 (4 kg) ..... $950/$1000

The **OMEGA, WHIRLPOOL AWG 354** and **BENDIX** front loaders each only have lower scores in one area — see the table starting on page 42.

As you can see from *Reliability* on page 45, around a quarter of the **HOOVER**s, **GE**s and **WHIRLPOOL**s in our survey needed repair in the past year. This is about average for most of the major brands, though well behind the very reliable **KLEENMAID**s and **FISHER & PAYKEL**s.





Unfortunately not enough people told us about their experiences with **THOR** machines for us to be able to report on their reliability, so we can't fill in that side of the story for this machine. However, our test model arrived with a loosely anchored electrical cord — we could pull it off — so we're a little concerned about their quality control.

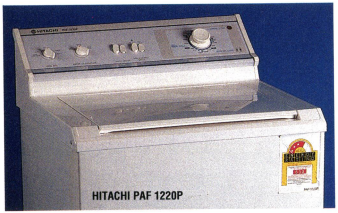
TOP LOADERS

	HITACHI PAF 1220P (5.5 kg)	$880
	HITACHI PAF 1260PX (5.5 kg)	$920
equal	**SIMPSON** Concorde 527/Contessa 426/ Riviera 429 (5 kg)	$680
	SIMPSON Deluxe 526/Genesis 525 (5 kg)	$720
	SIMPSON Enduro 701/702 (7 kg)	$1000/1100
	WESTINGHOUSE Laundromat 555 (5 kg)	$680

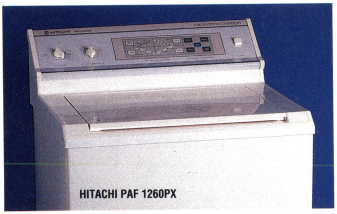
For the extra $200 or so, the 5.5 kg **HITACHI**s give you better water efficiency and are much gentler on clothes; they're also a little more reliable. However, the 5 kg **SIMPSON**s and the **WESTINGHOUSE** removed slightly more dirt in both cold and warm water.

What to look for

- If your laundry only has a cold-water tap and you want the option of warm-water washes, buy a machine with a built-in water heater. (See the table overleaf for a list of which machines have heaters. Only one of the top loaders we tested does — the **HOOVER 2025**.)
- Some front loaders need a special tap connector if your laundry only has one tap. Without it they won't be able to operate on some cycles. You'll also need one for them if you want to wash in cold water only. It's either a 'Y' or an 'F' connector, and it makes the machine think water is entering from two taps, not just one. The machines affected in this test are the **THOR TH 85, GE WWA 6504/7504/8504, OMEGA CW675** and the **BENDIX WMN 652**. Only the GE models are supplied with this connector.
- For smaller laundries front-loading washing machines are more compact than top loaders, but don't forget to allow for electrical and plumbing connections. If you want to put a clothes dryer above a top loader, remember to allow enough space to open the lid.
- If you're not very tall, reaching the bottom of the bowl in a large top loader could be difficult. You also need to be able to reach the machine's lint filter for occasional cleaning.
- Washing machines with a wide range of adjustable water levels are far more economical and water-efficient than machines with a set level, especially if your load sizes often vary.
- If you like using a fabric softener, keep in mind that all front loaders — but not all top loaders — have a compartment for loading the softener before the wash. Top loaders without this facility require you to add the softener manually towards the end of the cycle.
- If you're put off by the number of fancy buttons on the newer-style washing machine control panels, you'll find they're as easy to operate as machines with the traditional controls if you read the instructions first. It's important to read the manual regardless of machine type, and to keep it handy for an occasional reminder of all the machine's capabilities.


HITACHI PAF 1220P

SIMPSON Concorde 527/Contessa 426/
Riviera 429/Deluxe 526/Genesis 525
WESTINGHOUSE Laundromat 555


HITACHI PAF 1260PX

SIMPSON Enduro 701/702

Washing machines under $1200

	Brand/model (in rank order, cold wash)	Manufacturer/ distributor	Origin	Target price ($)*	Warranty (years)	Dimensions ** (WxDxH, mm)	Cycle time (min)	Wash load (kg)	Running cost ($ per 1000 cold/warm w
	THOR TH 85 **(F)** *(A)*	Bendix	Italy	1000	2 *(H)*	595 x 520 x 845	67	4.5	65 / 74
	GE WWA 6504 **(F)** *(A)*	MEA	UK	920	2 *(J)*	595 x 560 x 850	55	5.0	65 / 76
equal	**GE** WWA 7504 **(F)** *(A)*	MEA	UK	1060	2 *(J)*	595 x 560 x 850	55	5.0	65 / 76
	GE WWA 8504 **(F)** *(A)*	MEA	UK	1160	2 *(J)*	595 x 560 x 850	55	5.0	65 / 76
	OMEGA CW675 **(F)** *(A)*	Omega	Italy	1000	2	595 x 520 x 845	69	5.0	67 / 81
equal	**WHIRLPOOL** AWG 384 **(F)**	Whirlpool	Italy	1040	2 *(K)*	595 x 525 x 845	53	4.5	88 / 96
	HOOVER Electra Economiser 550 **(F)**	Southcorp	Australia	950	2	585 x 570 x 860	49	4.0	96 / 112
equal	**HOOVER** Electra Economiser 555 **(F)**	Southcorp	Australia	1000	2	585 x 570 x 860	49	4.0	96 / 112
	WHIRLPOOL AWG 354 **(F)**	Whirlpool	Italy	880	2 *(K)*	595 x 525 x 850	87	4.5	81 / 100
	BENDIX WMN 652 **(F)** *(A)*	Bendix	Italy	1150	2 *(H)*	595 x 570 x 850	84	5.0	50 / 59
	FISHER & PAYKEL Smart Drive 053 **(T)** *(B)*	Fisher & Paykel	NZ	855	1 *(L)*	560 x 560 x 985	39	5.0 *(B)*	83 / 110
	FISHER & PAYKEL Smart Drive 503 **(T)** *(B)*	Fisher & Paykel	NZ	965	1 *(L)*	560 x 560 x 985	39	5.0 *(B)*	83 / 110
	FISHER & PAYKEL Smart Drive 703 **(T)** *(B)*	Fisher & Paykel	NZ	1210	1 *(L)*	645 x 655 x 1000	54	7.0 *(B)*	95 / 121
	HITACHI PAF-1220P **(T)**	Hitachi	Japan	880	3	605 x 610 x 1030	36	5.5	78 / 102
	HITACHI PAF-1260PX **(T)**	Hitachi	Japan	920	3	605 x 610 x 1020	38	5.5	81 / 107
	SIMPSON Concorde 527 **(T)**	Email	Australia	680	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 1030	44	5.0	83 / 110
equal	**SIMPSON** Contessa 426 **(T)**	Email	Australia	680	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 1030	44	5.0	83 / 110
	SIMPSON Deluxe 526 **(T)**	Email	Australia	720	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 1030	44	5.0	83 / 110
	SIMPSON Genesis 525 **(T)**	Email	Australia	720	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 1030	44	5.0	83 / 110
	SIMPSON Riviera 429 **(T)**	Email	Australia	680	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 1030	44	5.0	83 / 110
	WESTINGHOUSE Laundromat 555 **(T)**	Email	Australia	680	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 1030	44	5.0	83 / 110
	SIMPSON Enduro 501 **(T)**	Email	Australia	800	5 *(M)*	600 x 640 x 1020	45	5.0	83 / 99
	SIMPSON Enduro 502 **(T)**	Email	Australia	900	5 *(M)*	600 x 640 x 1020	45	5.0	83 / 99
	SIMPSON Enduro 701 **(T)**	Email	Australia	1000	5 *(M)*	675 x 700 x 1100	56	7.0	87 / 114
	SIMPSON Enduro 702 **(T)**	Email	Australia	1100	5 *(M)*	675 x 700 x 1100	56	7.0	87 / 114
	HITACHI SAF-1020PX **(T)**	Hitachi	Japan	800	3	570 x 570 x 1000	36	4.5	75 / 98
	ADMIRAL 520 **(T)** *(C)*	Southcorp	Australia	600	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	ADMIRAL 560 **(T)** *(C)*	Southcorp	Australia	660	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER 210 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	700	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER 250 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	720	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER 270 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	840	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
equal	**HOOVER** 300 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	880	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER 320 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	960	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER Commodore 292 **(T)** *(D)*	Southcorp	Australia	680	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER Commodore 392 **(T)** *(D)*	Southcorp	Australia	800	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER Galaxy 284 **(T)** *(E)*	Southcorp	Australia	720	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER Galaxy MSE 384 **(T)** *(E)*	Southcorp	Australia	800	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER Gemini 294 **(T)** *(G)*	Southcorp	Australia	720	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116
	HOOVER Gemini 394 **(T)** *(G)*	Southcorp	Australia	800	5	585 x 600 x 975	52	5.0	91 / 116

Footnotes overleaf

Clones

Some machines are identical in performance though sold or badged under a variety of names and with different features. These groups of 'clones' are indicated in the brand-name column by a square bracket to the right of the names. While their performance should be identical, different features and wash programs account for differences in price.

1 Wash load

This is the load stated on the energy rating label and the load we tested at. Generally this is a bit more than you would normally put into the machine. Particularly for front loaders it becomes a bit of a struggle to squeeze the last few items in.

2 Running costs

This is an estimate of the cost of washing 1000 kg of clothes under very specific conditions. See *Running costs* in the main article for more information.

3 Heater

If your laundry only has a cold-water tap, or you don't want to use up the household hot water supply, consider buying a machine with a built-in water heater.

Water used/water efficiency

The first column gives the total amount of water used for the rated load on a cold wash. To assess the water efficiency we worked out the amount of water used per kilogram of clothes washed. We then converted this to a rating where a lower water consumption per kilogram gets a higher score.

You may be unconcerned about water consumption at the moment, but Australia has limited water resources. If you buy a washing machine now you're likely to have it for the next 10 years or more, and water prices will probably rise significantly in most places during that time.

ater	4 Water used (litres)	4 Water efficiency score (%)	5 Energy efficiency score (cold [warm] wash, %)	6 Gentleness score (%)	7 Spin efficiency score (%)	8 Dirt removal score (cold [warm] wash, %)	9 Overall score (cold [warm] wash, %)	Brand/model (in rank order, cold wash)	
✓	62	72	95 [87]	78	64	79 [82]	78 [78]	**THOR** TH 85 **(F)** *(A)*	
✓	64	74	97 [87]	80	64	73 [81]	77 [77]	**GE** WWA 6504 **(F)** *(A)*	equal
✓	64	74	97 [87]	80	64	73 [81]	77 [77]	**GE** WWA 7504 **(F)** *(A)*	
✓	64	74	97 [87]	80	64	73 [81]	77 [77]	**GE** WWA 8504 **(F)** *(A)*	
✓	66	74	95 [82]	78	37	78 [82]	74 [73]	**OMEGA** CW675 **(F)** *(A)*	equal
✓	102	55	96 [89]	80	69	72 [77]	74 [74]	**WHIRLPOOL** AWG 384 **(F)**	
	92	54	94 [79]	76	62	75 [81]	73 [73]	**HOOVER** Electra Economiser 550 **(F)**	equal
✓	92	54	94 [79]	76	62	75 [81]	73 [73]	**HOOVER** Electra Economiser 555 **(F)**	
✓	77	66	94 [76]	74	42	79 [85]	73 [72]	**WHIRLPOOL** AWG 354 **(F)**	
✓	63	75	93 [84]	82	51	68 [78]	72 [76]	**BENDIX** WMN 652 **(F)** *(A)*	
	136	46	98 [71]	54	67	78 [85]	71 [69]	**FISHER & PAYKEL** Smart Drive 053 **(T)** *(B)*	
	136	46	98 [71]	54	67	78 [85]	71 [69]	**FISHER & PAYKEL** Smart Drive 503 **(T)** *(B)*	
	234	33	98 [72]	56	63	84 [86]	71 [68]	**FISHER & PAYKEL** Smart Drive 703 **(T)** *(B)*	
	117	57	98 [75]	68	46	77 [80]	71 [69]	**HITACHI** PAF-1220P **(T)**	
	127	54	98 [72]	62	48	79 [83]	71 [69]	**HITACHI** PAF-1260PX **(T)**	
	119	53	96 [70]	54	49	83 [85]	71 [68]	**SIMPSON** Concorde 527 **(T)**	
	119	53	96 [70]	54	49	83 [85]	71 [68]	**SIMPSON** Contessa 426 **(T)**	equal
	119	53	96 [70]	54	49	83 [85]	71 [68]	**SIMPSON** Deluxe 526 **(T)**	
	119	53	96 [70]	54	49	83 [85]	71 [68]	**SIMPSON** Genesis 525 **(T)**	
	119	53	96 [70]	54	49	83 [85]	71 [68]	**SIMPSON** Riviera 429 **(T)**	
	119	53	96 [70]	54	49	83 [85]	71 [68]	**WESTINGHOUSE** Laundromat 555 **(T)**	
	113	55	97 [81]	46	45	87 [87]	71 [69]	**SIMPSON** Enduro 501 **(T)**	
	113	55	97 [81]	46	45	87 [87]	71 [69]	**SIMPSON** Enduro 502 **(T)**	
	167	52	97 [70]	62	45	81 [84]	71 [67]	**SIMPSON** Enduro 701 **(T)**	
	167	52	97 [70]	62	45	81 [84]	71 [67]	**SIMPSON** Enduro 702 **(T)**	
	121	46	97 [75]	60	55	78 [83]	70 [69]	**HITACHI** SAF-1020PX **(T)**	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**ADMIRAL** 520 **(T)** *(C)*	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**ADMIRAL** 560 **(T)** *(C)*	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** 210 **(T)**	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** 250 **(T)**	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** 270 **(T)**	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** 300 **(T)**	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** 320 **(T)**	equal
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** Commodore 292 **(T)** *(D)*	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** Commodore 392 **(T)** *(D)*	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** Galaxy 284 **(T)** *(E)*	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** Galaxy MSE 384 **(T)** *(E)*	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** Gemini 294 **(T)** *(G)*	
	131	48	96 [72]	56	49	81 [84]	70 [67]	**HOOVER** Gemini 394 **(T)** *(G)*	

Continued overleaf

5 Energy efficiency

We measured energy efficiency on the basis of kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity used for each kilogram of a load of washing. A higher energy efficiency score means less energy is used. We have included the scores for energy efficiency for both warm and cold washes for easy comparison.

6 Gentleness

Swatches of easily frayed embroidery material were attached to garments in each wash load. The area of the swatch was measured before and after the wash. The less fraying that occurred, the more gentle the machine and the higher the score.

7 Spin efficiency

This was calculated by weighing the clothes before and after the whole wash cycle to determine how much water was left in them.

8 Dirt removal

Dirt removal was assessed using specially soiled white swatches. The brightness of the swatch (measured by the amount of light reflected) indicates how clean it is. We have included the results of both cold and warm washes for comparison. On average, warm water only removed 5% more dirt than cold.

9 Overall score

Dirt removal makes up 40% of the overall score since this is the primary purpose of a washing machine. The other four performance factors — water efficiency, energy efficiency, gentleness and spin efficiency — were each weighted equally at 15% of the overall score.

We've listed the machines in order of their cold-water scores, as this is the most economical and environment-conscious way to wash, and it's becoming increasingly popular in Australia.

Washing machines under $1200

1 2

	Brand/model (in rank order, cold wash)	Manufacturer/ distributor	Origin	Target price ($)*	Warranty (years)	Dimensions ** (WxDxH, mm)	Cycle time (min)	Wash load (kg)	Running cos ($ per 1000 cold/warm w
	ADMIRAL 7005 **(T)** *(C)*	Southcorp	Australia	760	2 *(N)*	660 x 695 x 1035	57	6.0	83 / 107
	HOOVER 2005 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	800	2 *(N)*	660 x 695 x 1035	57	6.0	83 / 107
	HOOVER Premier 706 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	620	2	600 x 600 x 990	51	4.0	94 / 122
	SIMPSON Delta 422 **(T)**	Email	Australia	600	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 995	43	4.0	101 / 135
equal	**SIMPSON** Riviera 428 **(T)**	Email	Australia	600	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 995	43	4.0	101 / 135
	WESTINGHOUSE Laundromat 425 **(T)**	Email	Australia	625	5 *(M)*	575 x 620 x 995	43	4.0	101 / 135
	WHIRLPOOL 5132 **(T)**	Whirlpool	USA	760	1 *(P)*	610 x 720 x 1060	60	5.0	95 / 123
	SIMPSON Encore 503 **(T)**	Email	Australia	920	5 *(M)*	600 x 640 x 1020	52	5.0	84 / 109
	SIMPSON Encore 504 **(T)**	Email	Australia	1000	5 *(M)*	600 x 640 x 1020	52	5.0	84 / 109
	ADMIRAL 6006 **(T)** *(C)*	Southcorp	Australia	730	2	660 x 695 x 1060	47	6.0	84 / 107
	HOOVER Elite 1206 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	750	2	660 x 695 x 1060	47	6.0	84 / 107
	ADMIRAL 7010 **(T)** *(C)*	Southcorp	Australia	860	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER 2010 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	900	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER 2020 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	970	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER 2025 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	1260	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
equal	**HOOVER** 2100 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	1000	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER 2120 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	1100	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER Commander 2040 **(T)** *(D)*	Southcorp	Australia	880	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER Commander 2140 **(T)** *(D)*	Southcorp	Australia	920	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER Galaxy 2060 **(T)** *(E)*	Southcorp	Australia	850	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER Galaxy 2160 **(T)** *(E)*	Southcorp	Australia	1100	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER Gemini 2090 **(T)** *(G)*	Southcorp	Australia	850	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	HOOVER Gemini 2190 **(T)** *(G)*	Southcorp	Australia	1000	5	660 x 700 x 1035	61	7.0	82 / 103
	GE WWA 6604 WH **(T)**	MEA	Canada	1120	2 *(Q)*	685 x 660 x 1090	41	5.0	125 / 168
	GE WWA 8894 WH **(T)**	MEA	Canada	1260	2 *(Q)*	685 x 660 x 1090	41	5.0	125 / 168
equal	**GE** WWA 8894 WW **(T)**	MEA	Canada	1260	2 *(Q)*	685 x 660 x 1090	41	5.0	125 / 168
	HOOVER 2200 **(T)**	Southcorp	Australia	1080	5	600 x 695 x 1085	63	7.0	84 / 106
	WHIRLPOOL 7255 **(T)**	Whirlpool	USA	1000	1 *(P)*	610 x 670 x 1060	46	6.5	66 / 87
equal	**SIMPSON** Encore 703 **(T)**	Email	Australia	1100	5 *(M)*	675 x 690 x 1090	53	7.0	86 / 119
	SIMPSON Encore 704 **(T)**	Email	Australia	1200	5 *(M)*	675 x 690 x 1090	53	7.0	86 / 119
	AMERICANA AW9850 **(T)**	MEA	Canada	1000	1 *(R)*	685 x 660 x 1090	42	5.0	117 / 144

* Prices shown are a good target to aim for, based on nationwide checks in July 1995.

** Dimensions are all rounded up to the nearest 5 mm, to make allowance for fitting the machines into tight spaces.

(F) Front loader.
(T) Top loader.

(A) These machines need an 'F' or 'Y' connector if you only have one tap in your laundry or you want to wash in cold water.
(B) When we tested, the new Fisher & Paykel 6 kg machine was not yet available.
(C) Exclusive to Vox.
(D) Exclusive to Retravision.
(E) Exclusive to Narta.
(G) Exclusive to Betta.
(H) Additional three years (parts only) on motor; additional eight years (parts only) on stainless steel inner or outer cylinder.
(J) Additional eight years (parts only) on inner stainless steel bowl against corrosion.
(K) 10 years on outer tub.
(L) Two years in total if you use the SmartCare reply card supplied.
(M) Additional five years (parts only) on wash and outer bowl against chipping, breaking or rust perforation.
(N) Additional three years against rust perforation of cabinet or washbowl, and on wash motor and transmission assembly.
(P) Five years (parts only) on gearcase assembly, replacement for any top or lid rust; 10 years (replacement) on outer tub.
(Q) Five years (parts only) on rust; 10 years (parts only) on gearbox assembly.
(R) Additional one year on sealed transmission or main motor.

For people with disabilities

An occupational therapist from the Independent Living Centre assessed all the machines for ease of use by people with disabilities. When buying a machine, keep in mind the following:

- Consider height and reach when buying a top-loading machine, as most have their controls located at the top back; also check whether you can reach the bottom of the wash bowl.
- If you have sight difficulties, choose a machine with clearly marked controls such as on the **HOOVER** and **SIMPSON** machines. The **AMERICANA** and **GE** dials are also clear.
- If you have difficulties with your hands, choose a machine with good-sized raised portions on the knobs. Also, if you're buying a front loader, remember they may be difficult to load to full capacity.
- Because the doors on front loaders are so low, they may be difficult for some people to squat in front of for loading. A small stool may help in these circumstances. On the other hand, they're more convenient than top loaders for people in a wheelchair.

er	4 Water used (litres)	4 Water efficiency score (%)	5 Energy efficiency score (cold [warm] wash, %)	6 Gentleness score (%)	7 Spin efficiency score (%)	8 Dirt removal score (cold [warm] wash, %)	9 Overall score (cold [warm] wash, %)	Brand/model (in rank order, cold wash)	
	155	48	96 [72]	60	39	80 [85]	69 [65]	**ADMIRAL** 7005 **(T)** *(C)*	
	155	48	96 [72]	60	39	80 [85]	69 [65]	**HOOVER** 2005 **(T)**	
	115	42	95 [67]	56	44	84 [86]	69 [65]	**HOOVER** Premier 706 **(T)**	
	113	44	96 [62]	56	44	82 [86]	69 [65]	**SIMPSON** Delta 422 **(T)**	
	113	44	96 [62]	56	44	82 [86]	69 [65]	**SIMPSON** Riviera 428 **(T)**	equal
	113	44	96 [62]	56	44	82 [86]	69 [65]	**WESTINGHOUSE** Laundromat 425 **(T)**	
	131	48	92 [65]	62	39	83 [86]	69 [68]	**WHIRLPOOL** 5132 **(T)**	
	121	52	96 [72]	42	48	82 [84]	69 [66]	**SIMPSON** Encore 503 **(T)**	
	121	52	96 [72]	42	48	82 [84]	69 [66]	**SIMPSON** Encore 504 **(T)**	
	153	49	97 [74]	62	33	80 [84]	68 [66]	**ADMIRAL** 6006 **(T)** *(C)*	
	153	49	97 [74]	62	33	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** Elite 1206 **(T)**	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**ADMIRAL** 7010 **(T)** *(C)*	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** 2010 **(T)**	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** 2020 **(T)**	
✓	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** 2025 **(T)**	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** 2100 **(T)**	equal
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** 2120 **(T)**	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** Commander 2040 **(T)** *(D)*	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** Commander 2140 **(T)** *(D)*	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** Galaxy 2060 **(T)** *(E)*	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** Galaxy 2160 **(T)** *(E)*	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** Gemini 2090 **(T)** *(G)*	
	170	51	96 [75]	56	36	80 [84]	68 [66]	**HOOVER** Gemini 2190 **(T)** *(G)*	
	165	34	95 [52]	64	39	80 [85]	67 [62]	**GE** WWA 6604 WH **(T)**	
	165	34	95 [52]	64	39	80 [85]	67 [62]	**GE** WWA 8894 WH **(T)**	
	165	34	95 [52]	64	39	80 [85]	67 [62]	**GE** WWA 8894 WW **(T)**	equal
	187	47	96 [74]	56	30	82 [84]	67 [65]	**HOOVER** 2200 **(T)**	
	117	64	95 [74]	64	45	68 [79]	67 [69]	**WHIRLPOOL** 7255 **(T)**	
	170	51	97 [65]	60	42	72 [84]	66 [66]	**SIMPSON** Encore 703 **(T)**	equal
	170	51	97 [65]	60	42	72 [84]	66 [66]	**SIMPSON** Encore 704 **(T)**	
	169	33	95 [68]	66	39	76 [82]	65 [63]	**AMERICANA** AW9850 **(T)**	

Reliability

We surveyed a sample of our subscribers about the reliability of their washing machines — we asked them if their machine had needed repair in the previous 12 months.

The results are given on the right for brands for which we had more than 50 responses; the number in brackets is the number of washing machines of a particular brand reported on by subscribers in the survey. On average, just under a quarter of the machines had needed repair during the past year, at an average cost of around $120.

Note that the results of the survey are for washing machines of all types and models, not just for those included in this test.

	% not needing repair
Kleenmaid (132)	92
Fisher & Paykel (397)	90
Hitachi (396)	80
Westinghouse (115)	78
General Electric (186)	76
Simpson (1304)	75
Hoover (1585)	74
Whirlpool/Malleys (285)	73
Gorenje Pacific (65)	65

We also asked our survey respondents whether they would buy the same brand of washing machine again.

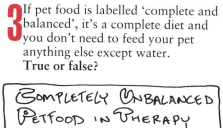
	% who would buy again
Hitachi (396)	98
Fisher & Paykel (395)	97
Kleenmaid (130)	92
Whirlpool/Malleys (281)	90
Westinghouse (113)	90
Hoover (1587)	87
Simpson (1302)	86
General Electric (183)	83
Gorenje Pacific (65)	74

WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

1 Male drivers under 45 are more likely to have a fatal car accident than women in the same age bracket.
True or false?

2 Brown or black crusts around the rims of bottles of mayonnaise, mustard and tomato sauce indicate the contents are going off and must be thrown away.
True or false?

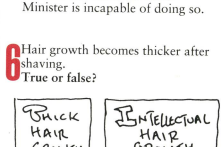
3 If pet food is labelled 'complete and balanced', it's a complete diet and you don't need to feed your pet anything else except water.
True or false?


COMPLETELY UNBALANCED PETFOOD IN THERAPY
IT'S EITHER TOTAL STRESS OR TOTAL BOREDOM! I JUST CAN'T COPE!
YOU FEEL YOU CAN'T COPE...
ROVER

4 Focaccia and fruit loaf are healthier than wholemeal bread.
True or false?

5 What are the 'reserve powers' of the Governor-General of Australia?
A) The powers the Governor-General can use without the government's approval.
B) The powers the Governor-General can use only in time of war.
C) The powers the Governor-General can use if the Prime Minister is incapable of doing so.

6 Hair growth becomes thicker after shaving.
True or false?



RECALLS AND BANS

If you find a recall or ban not on our list, please let us know. Companies often rent 008 or 1800 numbers for a couple of months after the recall is announced. If the number given is no longer operating, phone the manufacturer or retailer direct.

Amcal has recalled **AMCAL PROMETHAZINE ELIXIR** (batch no. 32847), in 100 mL amber bottles, as it could contain eucalyptus oil. If ingested, the oil could cause nausea, vomiting, dizziness, muscular weakness, delirium and convulsions. Don't use the elixir. Return to your local Amcal chemist for a refund. For more information, call 1800 500 760.

Bloom's Health Foods has recalled **BLOOM'S HERB-A-LAX COMPOUNDED MEDICINAL HERBS FOR CONSTIPATION**, as they may contain salmonella bacteria, which could cause inflammation of the bowel.
All batches commencing with the digits 927 are affected, as are all the following batches: 00010, 00011, 00013, 00018, 00021, 00022, 00024, 00025, 00026, 00027, 00035, 00040, 00042, 00044, 00053, 00055, 00057, 00065, 00066, 00069, 00070, 00087, 00097, 00098, 00105, 00107, 00116.

The herbs being recalled are sold in 75 g and 200 g packs and have an expiry date of 9/97. Don't use them. Return them to your local supplier for a replacement.

Alphapharm has recalled **CARDOL (SOTALOL HYDROCHLORIDE) TABLETS (160 mg ALPHAPHARM BRAND)**, as they may contain small fragments of metal. The recalled bottles contain 60 tablets, have an expiry date of 4/97 and were manufactured in Australia. Only batch numbers ND085 and ND085A are affected. (Batch numbers are printed after the circled B on the right-hand side of the label.) Return to place of purchase for a replacement. For further information, call 1800 077 421 or (07) 3271 3244 in the Brisbane metropolitan area.

ANSWERS

1. True. According to a Federal Office of Road Safety report released last year, men under 45 are 46% more likely to be involved in a fatal crash (per kilometres travelled) than women.
2. False. This crust is a result of oxidation. It's not harmful and doesn't mean the food is going off; just wipe it away.
3. True — or least it should be. Under the Pet Food Industry Association of Australia Inc's (self-regulated) Code of Practice, a pet food which claims to be 'complete and balanced' supplies the minimum diet to ensure an animal can maintain its body weight and size, assuming normal exercise.
4. False. On average, a slice of wholemeal bread contains 1 g of fat, 3 g of fibre and 570 kJ of energy, compared to fruit loaf and focaccia, which each contain 3 g of fat, only 2 g of fibre and 810 kJ and 720 kJ respectively.
5. A. The Governor-General's reserve powers are the power to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister and the government, and to refuse a Prime Minister's request for a dissolution of the House of Representatives or both Houses of Parliament.
6. False. No method of hair removal makes regrowth thicker. But it may *feel* coarser and thicker after shaving because the razor cuts the thin, tapering end of the hair.

CHOICE

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Baby's Stuff has recalled **BRESTIL ROMA HIGH CHAIRS**, sold since March 1993. These high-low chairs are on castors and have a removable seat. The plastic hooks attaching the seat to the frame may eventually bend beyond 90°, which could cause the chair to tilt forward and/or detach from the frame. Return the chair to your retailer for checking and, if necessary, modification free of charge. For more information, call (02) 725 7100.

Lennox Australia has issued a safety notice advising that owners of a **LENNOX STOWAWAY HORIZONTAL GAS CENTRAL HEATING FURNACE** may need to have it inspected to ensure it meets current safety standards. These furnaces have been installed in roof spaces since 1987. Affected models have a serial number between AU87 A 001 and AU92 M 999 imprinted on a label immediately below the identification plate adjacent to the furnace control box. If you own one of these models, call Lennox on 1800 811 780 and give details of the serial number to determine whether it should be inspected, and to arrange a free safety inspection if necessary. Other furnace models are not affected.

Asko Appliances has recalled **ASKO/ASEA DISHWASHERS** (models 1253, 1403, 1473 and 1503, purchased between January 1992 and October 1995), as they may have faulty door switches — water from the operating dishwasher may enter the switch and cause an electrical short. Don't use these models. Phone Asko on 1800 638 702 to arrange for a free service call to check the switch. The model number is printed on a sticker on the side of the door.

IBM Australia has notified customers that **IBM 9527 COLOUR MONITORS** sold from September 1993 may not be properly assembled. If not correctly earthed, they could pose a risk of electric shock. If you have a 9527 model (the model number can be found inside the pull-down flap on the front of the monitor or on the rear information label), call IBM on 13 1426 to find out whether your monitor is affected and needs repair. Meanwhile, make sure you use these monitors only with a properly wired, earthed outlet and with the power cord supplied with the monitor.

TWELVE-MONTH INDEX

JANUARY 1995 — DECEMBER 1995

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(D) Includes assessment of suitability for people with disabilities
(U) Update of previous report
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